Polyhedron™

NEWSZINE

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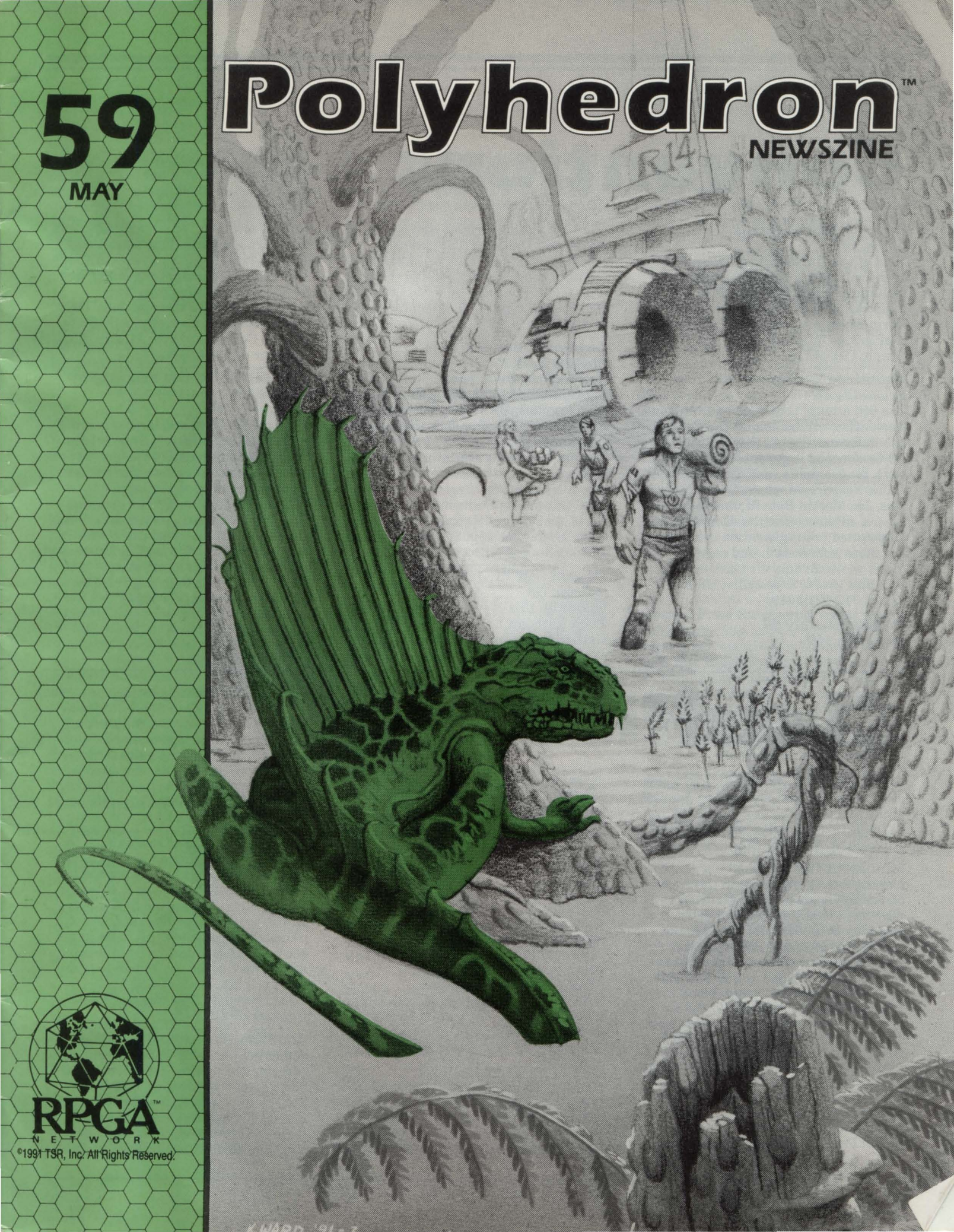

RPGA™ NETWORK

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Conventions

Opticon, May 31-June 2
Akron, OH
Held at the University of Akron, this event will offer a variety of games, including Network events. Pre-registration is $15 for the weekend. Dorm rooms are available. For information write: Opticon 91, P.O. Box 4876, Akron, OH 44310, or call 216-972-7713.

Glathricon '91, June 21-23
Evansville, IN
The 8th annual Glathricon gaming convention will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville. Author Ed Greenwood is guest of honor. Network tournaments include AD&D® Game Feature, Masters, Grand Masters, Joe Martin Benefit, and many others. Admission at the door is $20. Discounted pre-registration is available. For more information and registration forms write: Evansville Gaming Guild. P.O. Box 15414, Evansville, IN 47716, or call 812-421-1010.

Origins '91, July 4-7
Baltimore, MD
The 17th annual Origins convention moves east this year. The extensive schedule of game events will include 10 Network tournaments, most of them brand new. For more information write: GEMCO, P.O. Box 609, Randallstown, MD 21133.

Coscon '91, July 5-7
Slippery Rock, PA
Sponsored by the Circle of Swords Gaming Guild, this three day convention at Slippery Rock University features first-run Network tournaments, military miniatures, board games, dealers' area, flea market, and a miniatures painting contest. Inexpensive university housing is available on site. Registration is $15 until June 15th. For more details send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003-2126, or call Dave Schnur at 412-283-1159.

Dragon Con '91, July 12-14
Atlanta, GA
Guests for this event include Piers Anthony, L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp, and several other authors and creative artists. More than 100 tournaments include feature-and masters-level Network events, strategic, miniature, and computer gaming, and a 24-hour open gaming area. Pre-registration is $26 through June 15th. For more information send a SASE to Dragon Con, Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362 or call 404-925-2813.

GEN CON® 24 Game Fair, August 8-11
Milwaukee, WI
The world's oldest and largest gaming convention once again will be held at the MECCA convention center. Network attractions include about three dozen tournaments and seminars, a Wednesday-night member's meeting, Saturday breakfast and Gamers Choice awards ceremony, a costume contest, and an art show. For more information or pre-registration forms write: GEN CON Game Fair HQ, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Classifieds

Massachusetts Needed, AD&D® game players to augment an existing gaming group and to form a new one. Call 617-933-1920, or write Michael Oakley, 15 Poole St, Woburn, MA 01801.

Minnesota I am a 16-year-old gamer looking for other gamers in the South Minneapolis area who are willing to play the AD&D 2nd Edition game. I also play Star Wars. In addition, I'm looking for pen pals and would like to join a play-by-mail campaign. Please contact Karl Madgen at 612-925-3024, or write me at 5115 Queen Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55410.

Puerto Rico I'm a 25-year-old male player looking for game masters and players in the central and metropolitan areas. I'm mainly interested in the D&D® game and the AD&D game, but I'm willing to learn others. I'm also looking for pen pals from Puerto Rico. Write: Pedro L. Rivera, P.O. Box 1034, Aguas Buenas, PR 00607 or call 809-732-0814.

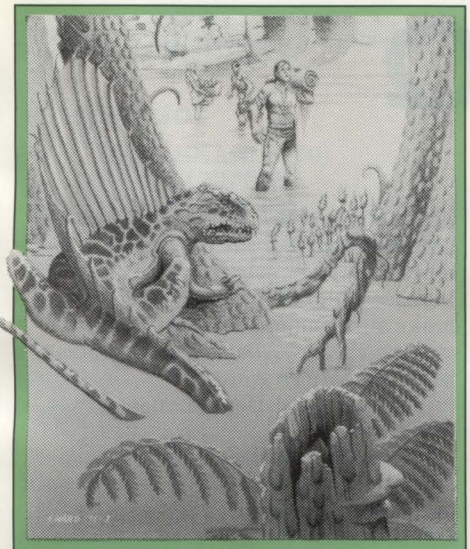
Texas Any role players living near Fort Worth who are interested in starting a club please contact Tom Allen, c/o Westside Gamers, 4408 Springbranch, Fort Worth, TX 76116. I hope to hear from you soon.

General Dragonslayers Unlimited is looking for members. We are an official Network club dedicated to play-by-mail gaming. We run AD&D games, STAR FRONTIERS™ games, DAWN PATROL® games, Heroes Unlimited, and others. For more information write: Dragonslayers Unlimited, c/o Bill Brierton, 3700 Pecan Ct, Waldorf, MD 20602.

General Wanted: video of the skits from the Network members meeting at the GEN CON® '90 game fair. ARGH!, a Network club, would like to obtain a VHS copy of the video we saw some members taking during the meeting. We would like to use the video to promote the RPGA™ Network in our area and to encourage more Network members to attend the game fair. ARGH! will pay all costs for duplication and mailing. Please write: ARGH!, c/o Steve Bonario, 7829 Cook Rd, Houston, TX 77072.

General Help! I need money, fast, to finance my role-playing habit. I have a collection of things I no longer want including GURPS hardcover rules, MERP rules, *A Naturalist's Guide to Talislanta, Monster Manual I,* lead miniatures, and more. All these items are in great condition, a lot of them are new items I never got around to trying. For a full list, send a SASE to Peter Pochylski, 144 Nevins Street, Dunkirk, NY 14048.

Attention Budding Authors West End games is looking for Network members to create characters, adventures, and gadgets for its Paranoia, Star Wars, and Torg games. West End will pay for such material upon acceptance. For details: Richard Hawran, c/o West End Games, RD3 Box 2345, Honesdale, PA 18431.



About the Cover

A view of the countryside on the planet Portroal, from this issue's installment of The Living Galaxy. Art by Kevin Ward.

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Polyhedron™ NEWSZINE

Volume 11, Number 3
Issue #59, May, 1991

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Notes From HQ

Milestones and Miles To Go (To Europe)

You're holding something very special—the first monthly issue of the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine.

The Newszine has come a long way since the RPGA™ Network began 11 years ago. Issue #1, produced in the summer of 1981, was 16 pages, black and white throughout, and featured an interview with Gary Gygax and articles on the BOOT HILL® game, GAMMA WORLD® game, THE FIGHT IN THE SKIES™ game, and the AD&D® game. The Newszine was a quarterly publication then, going bi-monthly in 1982.

We're very proud of the present POLYHEDRON Newszine. And we hope you enjoy reading it as much as the staff enjoys putting it together.

Win A Trip To European GEN CON® Game Fair

To mark the beginning of its second decade of excellence, the Network wanted to do something special—and we thought a trip to European GEN CON Game Fair would fit the bill.

This special prize will be awarded at August's GEN CON® Game Fair in Milwaukee, WI.

To vie for the prize, you must compete in two tournaments: the AD&D game benefit event and the AD&D game feature.

The winner will be the player who wins his or her session of the benefit *and* has the highest aggregate score from all his or her sessions in the feature tournament.

That's it, nice and simple—and definitely exciting. You won't have to fill out any special forms to compete for the prize, HQ will do all the work by sifting through the winners of the benefit event and recording their scores from the feature tournament.

The winner will be announced during the awards ceremony at GEN CON Game Fair. The prize includes round trip air fare from one of several major cities, free admission to the convention, and accommodations at the convention. The winner will have to pay for food and cover other expenses.

Network members should consider pre-registering for the benefit and feature tournaments to gain entry in this contest.

European GEN CON Game Fair will be held in England in November. The exact dates were not available at press time. However, they will be announced within the next few issues.

European GEN CON Game Fair will feature a plethora of RPGA Network tournaments, other role-playing events, miniatures, board games, and much more.

More About GEN CON Game Fair?

Well, just a little more. I know it's many months before the convention, but there are a few things I just have to talk about.

It appears we will have a record number events this year—likely three dozen! Then, of course, we'll toss in some seminars and sponsor the art show and auction and the masquerade.

Because we have so many activities, we're going to need a lot of judges. Volunteer now! Judges are assigned to tournaments on a first-come, first-served basis. I have a feeling we're going to need a considerable amount of feature and benefit judges, so don't hesitate to help us out and sign up. You can use the judge form insert that appears in this issue.

Network Clubs

An increasing number of Network members are forming clubs, and as the number of clubs grow, so do the activities we offer.

For example, a membership drive just for Network clubs—with nifty prizes—ends this month. There is the ever-popular, year-long Gaming Decathlon, and there are team tournaments just for sanctioned clubs. This year's club event at GEN CON Game Fair will be a three-round AD&D game tournament.

There are also a few problems associated with clubs; namely some club officers don't pass on to their members information about the activities. Perhaps the club officers forget or lose the letters Network HQ sends out. Whatever the reason, some club members are simply being left out of the competitions. If you're a club member, you can help by pestering the club officers for news about competitions and the Gaming Decathlon. If you're a club officer, make sure you get with the program and get the information out to your members. We're going to help by listing reminders about Decathlon events in this column.

Upcoming Decathlon activities include Glathricon's AD&D game benefit tournament in June in Evansville, IN, and a writing contest: create six characters for your favorite role-playing game; entries must be postmarked on or before May 15th, 1991.

If you're not a club member and all these activities intrigue you, write to Network HQ for a club form, get a group of your friends together, and start a Network club.

Potion Contest

The HQ staff had such a good time reading the entries for last year's magic item contest, that we decided to do something similar this year. Hence, a potion contest.

The guidelines are easy: create one or more new potions for the AD&D® game. Write no more than one page on each potion and put only one potion on each page. The first place prize is a two-year extension to your Network membership; second place nets a one-year extension; and third place nets six months.

All entries must be typed, double-spaced, and on 8 1/2" by 11" paper. Computer printouts are acceptable if they can be easily read. All entries will be considered submissions to the Newszine. **Make sure your name and membership number appears on each potion submission.** All entries must be postmarked on or before July 1st, 1991. The best entries will appear in a future issue of the Newszine.

Take Care,

Jean

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Letters

Paragon Protest

I object to the new Paragon ranking announced in issue 57. This change does nothing to award good play. Rather, it rewards those who can afford to play a lot. I'll explain:

The point system currently not only rewards players for finishing a round in the top three and for advancing in later rounds, but also just for showing up. Though it might take awhile, a mediocre player can reach the top level just by living in an area with lots of sanctioned events. Creating a new ranking does not reward quality play because it's more of the same. It also diminishes the current Master and Grand Master ranking because they become one step lower on the advancement ladder.

If the Network genuinely wants to reward good play, let's try something different. First, for those who have reached the Grand Master level, why not have events that require an entrant to have placed in the top three in a previous event? I also suggest that a top-three finish in an appropriate event be required before anyone can gain a new rank. Feature-level players should have a top-three finish in a Feature event before attaining Master level. Masters should have a top-three finish in a Masters event before becoming Grand Masters. While a player still would need a minimum number of points to gain a rank, he or she also would have to demonstrate a talent for quality play.

Anthony Regan,
Los Angeles, CA

The Paragon ranking was created because there was a growing number of Grand Master players who wanted a new goal toward which to work. Of course, there eventually will be a large body of Paragon-level members with the same problem, but the sheer number of points required to reach Paragon level will prevent that from happening for several years. Perhaps then we'll look at revamping the whole system. Right now, however, that is out of the question.

Anthony, we've heard your idea before—in fact, there already are tournaments that work your way. The ConnCon people in Connecticut have instituted a regional championship tournament for which the entry requirement is a first-place finish in a Feature-level event. The Network Advisory Committee has produced a set of guidelines for holding such events in your own area, and these are available from HQ. In any case, HQ does not have the resources to formally adopt such a change. Right now, we're looking for ways to reduce *the amount of time we spend on the point system—and we have. By obtaining new software and changing some office procedures, we are now processing more tournament results in less time. At this time we cannot surrender that gain by adding a new level of bookkeeping. Here at HQ we have to be concerned with keeping the whole Network running smoothly. That includes getting the new, monthly Newszine out on time without sacrificing quality, getting sanctioned tournaments running in places where there haven't been any before, making the new retailer program work, and a whole raft of other things. For now, we've reached the practical limit on the amount of time we can spend on the point system.*

You are pretty much correct about what the point system currently does; it is designed primarily to reward and encourage participation. *The Network does not run tournaments at more than 120 conventions each year just so it can hand out prizes and points. We run tournaments so members can get together and play quality events. Most Network members share a common view of what makes a good role-playing game session: vibrant, three-dimensional characters; camaraderie between the players; and a GM who sees to it that everybody has a good time. Prizes and points are just frosting on the cake.*

Besides, most—if not all—highly-ranked players and GMs are very skilled (how many truly mediocre Master-level players can you name?). One does not go though the entire Network tournament process without learning something. It stands to reason that even a member who attains a good ranking through sheer longevity will be a better role-player at the end of the process than at the beginning. A member who is uninterested in quality play and too stubborn to learn anything will not remain an active tournament player long enough to achieve a good rank.

You also are right about another thing: where you live can affect your Network ranking. Here at HQ we're doing our best to fix that. However, we won't succeed without help from the membership. We provide the foundation, but only local efforts can produce tournaments and conventions.

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On the Warpath

A Guide to Indian Wars in the BOOT HILL® Game

by Mark Easterday

This is an account of skirmishes, wars, and brief clashes between the United States and various Indian tribes between 1834 and 1898. the list is useful for planning BOOT HILL® game scenarios.

Possible adventures include scenarios where characters assist expeditions against hostile Indians; Indian characters raiding settlements (or assisting the cavalry against rival tribes); PCs being trapped in beleaguered settlements, forts, or wagon trains; and characters being sent to reservations to quell uprisings.

These scenarios might pit Indian PCs against cowboy PCs, which can create explosive role-playing situations. Referees in such scenarios must take extra care to remain impartial.

1834 The Pawnee mount an expedition in the Indian Territory between June and September.

1836 Heatherly Indian disturbances on the Iowa-Missouri state line.

1836 The Cherokee are forcibly removed to the Indian Territory. The relocation, called "The Trail of Tears," lasts until 1838.

1837 The Osage go on the warpath in Missouri.

1847 Cayuse Indian war rages in Oregon. The conflict lasts from December 1847 to July 1848.

1848 Apache, Navajo, and Utah Indian war begins; it lasts until 1855.

1849 Texas and New Mexico Indian war begins; it also lasts until 1855.

1849 Disturbances between the Navajo and white settlers in New Mexico last until 1861.

1849 Disturbances between the Comanche, Cheyenne, Lipan, and Kickapoo and white settlers in Texas last until 1861.

1850 Pit River expedition in California is mounted between April 28 and September 13.

1851 Rogue River Indian war begins in Oregon. Fighting rages from June 17 to July 3, 1851; August 8 to September 1, 1853; and March 1 to June 1, 1856.

1854 Oregon Indian war occurs between August and September.

1855 The Yakima mount an expedition in the Washington Territory between October 11 and November 24.

1855 Klama and Salmon River Indian wars are fought in Oregon and Idaho between January and March.

1855 Winna expedition against the Snake Indians in Oregon launched on May 24; it lasts until September 8.

1855 The Sioux mount an expedition in Nebraska Territory from April 3, 1855 to July 27, 1856.

1857 Disturbances between the Sioux and white settlers in Minnesota and Iowa during March and April.

1858 Expedition against the northern Indians in Washington Territory mounted from July 17 to October 17.

1858 Expedition mounted against the Navajo in New Mexico from September 9 to December 25.

1858 Expedition against the Wichita mounted in the Indian Territory from September 11, 1858 to December 1, 1859.

1859 Colorado River expedition mounted against Indians in California from February 11 to April 28.

1859 Pecos expedition mounted against Indians in Texas from May 8 to October 11.

1860 Expedition against the Kiowa and Comanche mounted in the Indian Territory from ~~May~~ 8 to October 11.

1860 Expedition against the Navajo in New Mexico from September 12, 1860 to February 24, 1861.

1862 Sioux Indian war fought in Minnesota and the Dakotas; it lasts through 1863.

1863 War against the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, and Comanche fought in Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and the Indian Territory; it lasts through 1869.

1865 Campaign against the Indians in southern Oregon, Idaho, and northern California conducted through 1869.

1867 A campaign against the Indians in Kansas, Colorado, and the Indian Territory conducted through 1869.

1872 Modoc Indian War fought in Oregon and California from November 22, 1872 to October 3, 1873.

1873 Campaign mounted against the Apache in Arizona and New Mexico.

1874 Expedition mounted against the Sioux in Wyoming and Nebraska from February 13 and August 1.

1874 Campaign against the Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Comanche in the Indian Territory conducted from August 1st, 1874 to February 16, 1875.

1875 Expedition mounted against the Sioux in eastern Nevada from September 7 to September 27.

1876 Big Horn and Yellowstone expeditions in Wyoming and Montana conducted between February 17, 1876 and June 13, 1877.

1876 War with the northern Cheyenne raged in the Indian Territory, Kansas, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Montana; it ends in 1879.

1877 Nez Perce Indian war fought in Utah from May 14 to October 1.

1878 Bannock Indian war fought in Idaho, Washington Territory, and Wyoming Territory.

1878 Campaign against the Cheyenne in the Dakotas and Montana conducted through 1879.

1879 Ute expedition in Colorado conducted between April 3rd and September 9.

1879 Disturbances between the Snake and white settlers in Idaho from August to October.

1879 White River campaign against the Ute in Utah and Colorado launched on September 29; it lasts until October 5.

1890 Sioux disturbances in South Dakota between November, 1890 and January, 1891.

1895 Chippewa disturbances in October at Leech Lake reservation in Minnesota.

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The Living City

The Two Brothers' Butchery

by Eric and Terence Kemper

The Two Brothers' Butchery is housed in an imposing building that puts the neighboring structures to shame. Thick stone blocks make up the basement and stand half-way up the first story. The remainder of the building is timber and plaster-covered brick and is complemented by the roof's dark gray slate shingles. Many patrons spend a few moments looking at the outside before going inside to shop.

The establishment is owned by Rufus Railsplitter, who also has another business not far away—The Dancing Bear Inn. However, Railsplitter rarely becomes involved with the butchery; he is bothered by the abattoir's smell and leaves its management to the dwarven operators Durto and Norin Bonebreaker.

Durto and Norin specialize in butchering pigs, cattle, goats, sheep, and an occasional bear, deer, or unusual creature killed in the nearby woods. They do not butcher poultry or game birds, not wanting to encroach on the business of a poultry butcher a few blocks away. The brothers also sell hides, mushrooms, other edible fungi, and casings for sausage. In turn, they purchase cheeses for resale in the shop, hickory logs for the smokehouse, and individual and herds of animals.

Because the butchery is owned by Railsplitter, it provides meat for The Dancing Bear Inn. Other nearby inns also purchase meat from the butchery, wanting to have as good of cuts as The Dancing Bear so they can compete for the neighborhood's business.

Adventurers frequent the shop to sell large animals for slaughter and to purchase smoked meats which will keep on long wilderness journeys.

As customers enter through the oaken double-doors, they face the L-shaped counter. Hanging above it are smoked hams and sausages and a few cheeses. Large cuts of meats are displayed on shelves lining the walls.

The building also features a storeroom, where the brothers' knives, axes, mallets, and chains are kept. These items are used to kill and butcher the animals. A primitive refrigerator is used to help preserve meats; all meats in this compartment are wrapped in hides or rough paper and piled on top of ice.

Behind the counter and storeroom is the slaughterhouse, or abattoir, where the animals are killed and cut into large sections. Most of the slaughtering is done in the very early morning hours so patrons are not bothered. Two huge, heavy cutting tables imported from Tantras are in the abattoir near a drain where the blood flows into the city's sewer system. The room always reeks of blood even though it is cleaned and straw strewn about it each day.

The livestock is kept in a holding pen and connected to the abattoir by a chute.

Also attached to the abattoir is a small barn for the dwarves' personal animals—a flock of chickens, eight goats, two dairy cows, and two draft horses, which they use to pull their meatwagon to town on market days. The brothers take very good care of the animals, and the barn is always clean and filled with fresh straw.

The complex's smokehouse is across a small dirt-floored yard. The dwarves smoke various cuts of meat and sausage there. Wood for smoking is stacked in a crib behind the house.

The most unusual feature of the butchery is an icehouse that lies about 20 yards beyond the smokehouse; it is set into a small knoll. A broad ramp leads down to the icehouse and its thick oaken doors. The doors are always securely locked, as the dwarves want to guard their precious ice.

The icehouse is actually a natural cave that has been squared off by the brothers and reinforced with wooden beams. The cave is kept cold because of an enchantment cast on it; a perpetual, but mild, *ice storm* falls inside the cave. Here the dwarves keep frozen carcasses of animals butchered during the fall, when they are fattest and healthiest, in preparation for the Harvest Feasts and leaner times of winter and early spring. They also keep cheese, milk, and root vegetables in a warmer corner of the room.

As too much ice accumulates in the cave, the dwarves gather and sell it, competing with The Ice House (see issue #53) in another section of Ravens Bluff.

In a branch of the cave, the dwarves raise a truffle-like fungus, which they cut into steaks that command high prices. The Bonebreakers bring offal and ground bones from the butcher shop to use as compost for the fungus.

The dwarves are unaware of a small hole in one wall of the fungus-nursery which connects to a series of winding caverns that extend deep beneath a portion of the city. A vampire named Walescu has made his home here, keeping three coffins in different chambers. He was drawn to the area by the smell of blood from the butchery and feasts on it as it drains down into the sewer. Of course, he also supplements his diet with an occasional human or demi-human, but the attacks are rare—as he does not want to draw the city's attention to this neighborhood.

To protect their extensive stock of meat, fungus, and ice, the Bonebreakers cast *wyvern watch* spells off *rings of spell storing* loaned to them by the butchery's owner. Further, they have spread the rumor that a monster of some sort lives deep within the icehouse caverns, never realizing how close to the truth their story hits.

Price List In Gold Pieces

Animal	Live Cost	Dressed Cost
Ox	15	23
Bull	20	30
Veal (calf)	5	7
Sheep (ewe)	2	3
Ram	4	5
Lamb	1	2
Pig	3	4
Goat	1	2
Wild Boar	10	15
Bear	30	45
Deer	15	23

Dressed carcasses have the heads, hide, hooves, and organs removed. The carcass is cleaned with salt water.

Illustration by Gary M. Williams

Animal Portions

	Animal Quarters	Specialty Cuts
Ox	7	3
Bull	10	4
Cow	5	2
Veal	2	1
Sheep	1	3
Ram	2	7
Pig	1	5
Goat	1	2
Wild Boar	2	2
Bear	12	4
Deer	7	3

Specialty cuts include one-half shoulder, leg, ribs, brain, tongue, stomach, liver, and kidneys.

Durto Bonebreaker

8th Level Male Dwarf Fighter

STR: 15
INT: 12
WIS: 13
DEX: 11
CON: 14
CHA: 6
AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 6
Hit Points: 56
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnomish

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe, hand axe, short sword, spear
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Butcher (18), Chanting (10)
Magic Items: *Ring of spell storing, battle axe +3, bracers of defense AC 6*

Durto, a 52-year-old, is addicted to his work. He is happiest when he is butchering animals or sawing ice. Of course, he likes gold even better than his job. Durto is wise enough, however, to tell his wife Naia, that she is the most important thing in his life.

He is dour and taciturn, especially with strangers. He prefers to deal with established customers and is likely to treat newcomers or adventurers brusquely. His one diversion is a once-a-week foray to The Dancing Bear Inn, usually on Saturday nights with his wife, Naia. There, he drinks too much and chants until the Bear's dwarven storytellers appear.

Durto is stockier than most dwarves, at 4′ and 160 pounds. He has the powerful arms of a butcher, and a face that stands out in the crowd. The dwarf is missing his right ear, having lost it in a fight several years ago. He retired from the dangerous life after that and began work for the butchery.

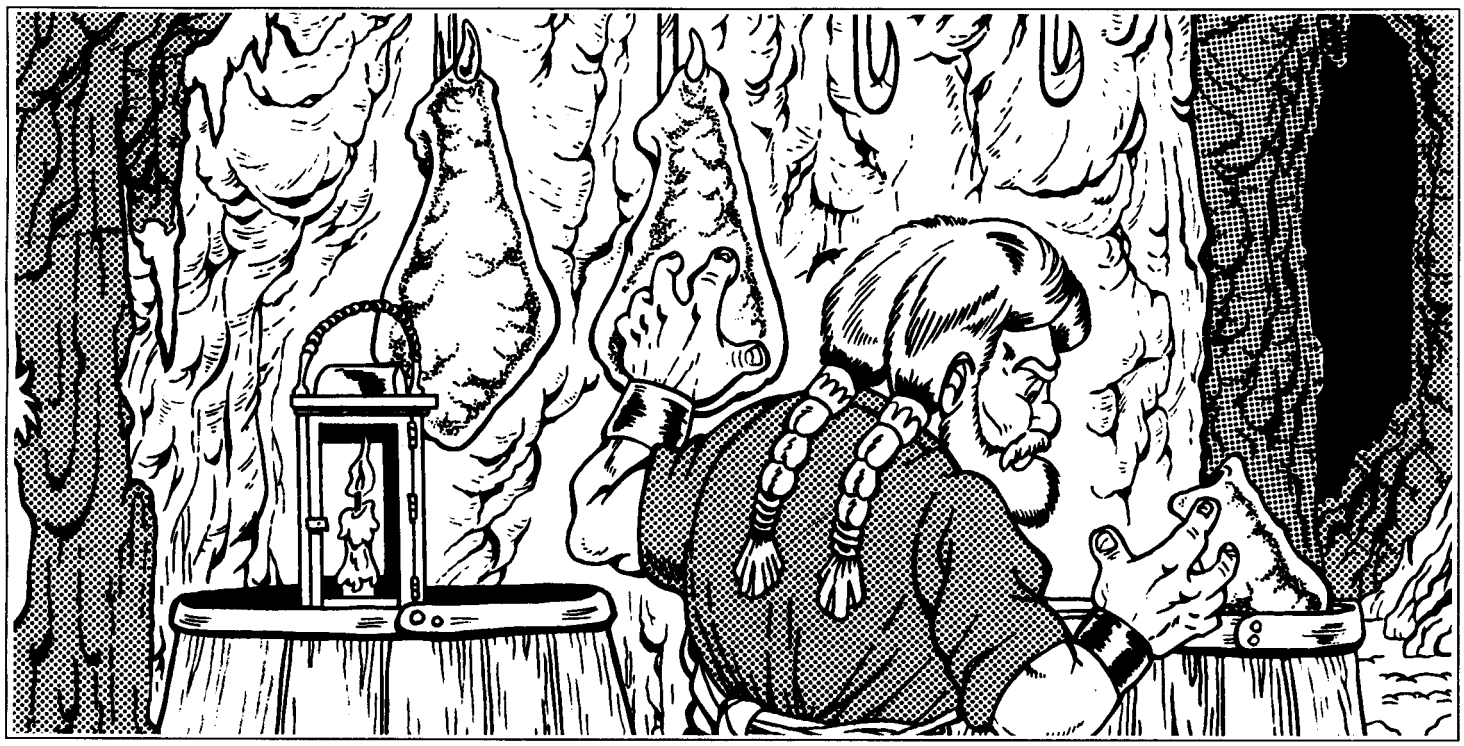
Norin Bonebreaker

5th Level Male Dwarf Cleric

STR: 17
INT: 9
WIS: 14
DEX: 9
CON: 10
CHA: 12
AC Normal: 9
AC Rear: 9
Hit Points: 25
Alignment: Neutral Good
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnomish

Weapon Proficiencies: War hammer, staff, mace
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Butcher (18), Religion (14)
Magic Items: *Ring of spell storing, ring of protection +1*
Spells/day: 3 3 1

Norin is an unusual dwarven priest. His spell abilities are limited and he is only able to cast *cure light wounds,*



detect magic, resist fire/cold, slow poison, protection from fire and *create food and water.*

Norin is smaller than Durto, standing 3'10" and weighing 115 pounds. At 40, he is the youngest of the Bonebreakers, and the easiest to get along with. The love of his life is a dwarf called Gorla, who was recently hired at the butchery.

He is fun-loving, open to strangers, and even plays practical jokes on old friends—but never on Durto. Norin also knows when it is time to be serious, and he is a very hard worker. His nights off are rare and are almost always spent at The Dancing Bear Inn.

He frequently hires adventurers to bring in giant boars and various herd animals to the butchery when city officials or wealthy residents want specialty meats.

The young Bonebreaker keeps his priestly nature secret. Several years ago he was visited by an obscure dwarven deity called Kagyar the Immortal. The deity granted Norin a limited spell list and bid him to help the unfortunate—secretly. He does this by helping sick urchins and street people. Norin is not able to turn undead.

Naia Bonebreaker

0 Level Female Dwarf

STR: 12
INT: 14
WIS: 13
DEX: 18
CON: 13
CHA: 16
AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 6
Alignment: Neutral
Languages: Common, Dwarven

Weapon Proficiencies: Hand axe
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Mining (10), underground tracking (13), appraising (14)

Durto's wife, Naia, is 3'4" tall and weighs 95 pounds. The 47-year-old dwarf is hard working and quiet. She usually can be found working the front of the shop and dealing with most of the customers. She wears her dark brown hair in braids about her head, and often wears green clothes that complement her sparkling kelly eyes.

A miner's daughter, Naia often misses the underground. She loves to stroll in the icehouse caverns, even though she sometimes gets spooked there.

Gorla

0 Level Female Dwarf

STR: 13
INT: 13
WIS: 10
DEX: 11
CON: 9
CHA: 17
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 6
Alignment: Chaotic Good
Languages: Common, Dwarven

Weapon Proficiencies: None
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Gem cutting (15)

Gorla is a pretty, light-hearted dwarf who turns the head of male human and demi-human customers. The 40-year-old is small and slim at 3'6" and 80 pounds. She spends most of her earnings on colorful, trendy clothes, hair ornaments, jewelry, and on having her hair styled. When not selling meats and cheeses, she flirts with the male customers.

She enjoys working at the butchery and being with Norin, but she misses the underground. It would not take much persuasion for a group of adventurers to lure her into an underground quest. ❑

The New Rogues Gallery

Unsung Heroes Of The Rebellion

by Joe Littrell

From The Memoirs Of Captain Scarlet Bloodhawk
Startime: SC 40324 K07

We'd reached big time in the old galaxy, at least for the time being. Haynes, Shandar, and I made a successful Kessel spice run and came out with the credits rolling. So, to celebrate, we spent the next week and a half bar hopping around Mandrine.

So begins one of the strangest chapters in the history of the Rebellion, recorded by Captain Scarlet Bloodhawk, a Rebel sympathizer and owner of the smuggler ship *Capri Nitari.* The good captain's entry sets down the chance meeting of Bloodhawk and her people with one of the most motley crews that ever made planetfall. And it all began on Mandrine, at a bar called . . .

. . . Maizie's. I was already drunk and wandered into the booth next to ours, which contained some alien I'd never seen before. He was about five-and-a-half feet tall, slight of build, with red fur on parts of his body. He had a nasty-looking tail, and he was carrying enough weapons to take out the entire bar. He had them hidden, but I can tell these things. Said his name was Kelly Vermillion.

Kelly Vermillion

Template: Merc
Race: Human/Orlak Mix
Height: 1.67 meters
Sex: Male

DEXTERITY: 3D+2
Blaster: 5D+2
Dodge: 5D+1
Grenade: 4D+1
Knife: 6D

PERCEPTION: 2D+1
Con: 3D+1
Hide/Sneak: 3D+1

KNOWLEDGE: 2D+2
Alien Races: 3D+1
Streetwise: 3D

STRENGTH: 3D+2
Climb/Jump: 5D

MECHANICAL: 2D+2
Astrogation: 4D
Starship Gunnery: 5D
Starship Piloting: 4D
Starship Shields: 3D

TECHNICAL: 2D+2
Comp. Prog/Repair: 4D
Demolition: 4D
Medicine: 5D
Starship Repair: 4D

Physical Description: Slight build, with red hair and light red fur on extremities. Prehensile tail, pointed ears.

Personality and Background: If Kelly Vermillion's alien appearance doesn't make him stand out in a crowd, his penchant for being a walking armory does. He carries a knife in a jeweled scabbard, but usually uses two vibroblades; so the knife's significance remains a mystery (it's probably just for show). Vermillion is known to have a short fuse—not unlike the explosives he loves to use. However, a bad incident with a thermal detonator has made him leery of explosives in other people's hands.

Vermillion is well-known for having the right tool for any job, but is quite capable of making (and using) primitive weapons if necessary.

Equipment: Blaster pistol (damage 4D), two vibroblades (damage STR+1D+2), knife (damage STR+2), two grenades (damage 5D), computer tool kit, glow rod, breath mask, medpac, chronometer, longbow (damage 2D+2), plasma welder, three flares, macrobinoculars.

Quote: "Are you sure you know what you're doin' with that thing?"

Maizie's was really hopping with some bird-man named Tyric playing the synthesizer, and the light displays were going full blast.

I was enjoying it . . . until Kronus and his goons showed up and started a brawl. We beat a hasty retreat and watched from a safe distance. Throughout the fight the bird-man taunted Kronus to draw his fire and keep the patrons safe. One of Kronus' dupes had a thermal detonator and was going to throw it (what a waste of good ale and people), but he was dropped before it blew up—don't know who got him. The bird-man grabbed the detonator and threw it at Kronus just as it went off. They were scraping rhino hide from the orbiting satellites for weeks.

Tyric

Template: Unknown Alien
Race: Shaliz'Na
Height: 2.14 meters
Sex: Male

DEXTERITY: 3D+1
Blaster: 4D+1
Grenade: 6D+1
Knife: 4D

PERCEPTION: 4D
Con: 5D

KNOWLEDGE: 2D+2
Streetwise: 5D
Music: 8D

STRENGTH: 3D
Brawling: 5D

MECHANICAL: 2D+2

TECHNICAL: 2D
Instrumental Repair: 4D

Physical Description: Muscular with twelve-foot wing span, Amerindian features, talonlike fingernails, black hair, light down covering skin.

Personality And Background: Tyric is a native of the planet Shar'Ack, the forested home of alcohol-addicted artisans enslaved by the Empire—which controls all liquor manufactured on and imported to the planet. Tyric is recovering from his own alcoholism by devoting himself to traveling and music—and fighting when the need arises. He prefers the chemically-propelled weapons of his home planet over the laser weapons of the Rebellion and regularly carries a pair of matched slugthrowers and a mini-submachinegun.

When Tyric met Kelly Vermillion, he was still very much an alcoholic and had a deathwish because of his inability to shake the habit. Kelly and others helped put him on the right course.

Tyric will risk everything except his friends to save those things he considers art. And he will accept paintings, sculptures, and other ornamental objects in lieu of credits for payment for his performances. During downtimes he usually can be found composing or listening to other musicians.

Equipment: Submachinegun (damage 4D), two slugthrowers (damage 3D), four grenades (damage 5D), glow rod, oxygen reprocessor, portable keyboard, recording rod

Quote: "You've got to look for the beauty in it all."

There was another bird-thing in the ruckus, I think it was female. I figured she was Tyric's mate, and she didn't give any signs to indicate otherwise. Said her name was Nana and that she answered only to Kelly Vermillion.

Well, that really threw me because I had a call from my buddy Haynes earlier who said there was a problem at the starport, a wookie throwing its weight around, nosing around our ship. I confronted Kelly (after the bar fight, of course), to see if he knew anything about the wookie, and found out that Nana was both creatures. She's from a race of shapechangers called the Homanans. And she practices telepathy, too.

Nana

Template: Unknown Alien
Race: Homanan
Height: Variable
Sex: Female

DEXTERITY: **5D**
Blaster: 7D+2

PERCEPTION: **2D+2**

KNOWLEDGE: **2D**
Languages: 4D

STRENGTH: **4D**

MECHANICAL: **2D+1**

TECHNICAL: **2D**
Medicine: 4D+1

FORCE SKILLS:
Shapechange: 4D

Physical Description: Variable

Personality And Background: Nana is a member of the mysterious shapechanging race known as the Homanans. She is able to alter her size from that of an ewok to a wookie, but rarely changes her personality. She seems always fun-loving and carefree. Nana enjoys using her abilities to confuse and bewilder others, and she is not above playing pranks at the most inopportune times.

Nana has been known to carry weapons used by several different races to help enhance her disguises. However, her weapon of choice is a blaster.

Equipment: Heavy blaster pistol (damage 5D), protective vest, sleeping bag, medpac, glow rod, wookie bowcaster (damage 4D)

Quote: "Funny, I've been standing here all this time and haven't see anybody who looks like that."

Oh, I'd better not forget the ant. Before we left the Rebel base, this weird little ship showed up with a large, intelligent ant in it. The creature said it was looking for fun and adventure. The Rebels at the base had all they could handle. So, guess who got hooked up with it . . . Kelly Vermillion and his pals.

I watched Vermillion's growing menagerie. The ant seemed to be interested in learning about everything it could get its feelers on. From what Kelly told me later, the little ant, Red, can take care of his end in a fight.

Red

Template: Unknown Alien
Race: Proliferan
Height: 1.81 meters
Sex: Male

DEXTERITY: **5D**
Bite: 7D (6D damage)

PERCEPTION: **5D**

KNOWLEDGE: **1D**
Alien Races: 2D+2
Languages: 3D
Survival: 1D+2

STRENGTH: **5D**
Digging: 6D

MECHANICAL: **2D+2**
Astrogation: 4D+2
Repulsorlift Op.: 3D+2
Starship Gunnery: 3D
Starship Piloting: 5D+2

TECHNICAL: **1D+1**
Security: 3D+2

Physical Description: Large, semi-upright, red ant.

Personality And Background: Spy 189, Known to the Rebellion as "Red," is an operative for the Proliferan Empire, ruled by Queen Yentuki. He is assigned to discover and evaluate other empires near it. During his travels, he learned much about human societies and the Rebellion. It is virtually impossible to tell much about his emotions because Proliferans communicate through body signals which are translated by an electronic device.

Red is not a coward, but will use the strategy taught him in training during combat: Get under something (even underground) and waylay enemies when they get close. He has little knowledge of the intricacies of Galactic language, taking slang terms quite literally.

Equipment: Microwave projector (4D damage), antigrav belt, language translator, space suit (utility), 200 feet of rope

Quote: "How interesting. Tell me more."

Much happened to the group after that bar fight. During a run on the Kessel mines—shortly after my own success—the group gained the smuggler ship Long Shot, *which they rechristened* Menagerie.

The group joined the Rebellion, and the Menagerie *was caught up in the shuffle of resettling after the apparent treason of the droid VDT-1E.*

Red was eventually caught in his espionage activities and is currently imprisoned by the Rebellion—it was a blow to Kelly who trusted the ant and believes he can be reformed.

Nana lost her Homanan body and was forced into one of a female Noolan technician named Otolia Ratiuv; that occurred after an explosion and the fortuitus presence of a Jedi Force Crystal. She seems to have lost her shapechanging ability and gained telepathy, though she has not yet mastered it.

Tyric eventually overcame his alcoholism; his music has sweetened as a result.

Each has placed their mark on the Rebellion, and will undoubtedly continue to do so. Me, I'm staying clear of the bunch. Well, it's time for another stop at Maizie's. I'll have to tell you about some other strange folks I met there—a bounty hunter named Justice and his . . . uh . . . pet, Truth. But that's for another log entry.

❑

The Living Galaxy

Recycling planets for fun and profit

by Roger E. Moore

The game master of a science-fiction role-playing game has his work really cut out for him. He looks with envy upon the harassed, overworked GM of a fantasy campaign, because the latter (unless he is running an AD&D® SPELLJAMMER™ campaign) has only *one* planet to worry about. The science-fiction referee must worry about a dozen planets or more, possibly even thousands of worlds, to run a successful campaign. It's a hard life, but that's what makes the science-fiction GM superior to his fantasy counterpart (cough, cough).

This column has several times looked at ways in which you can create whole planetary cultures out of things like history books, foreign travel guides, SF movies, and your last trip into Denver. It hasn't yet touched on ways to create the planets on which those cultures are based, however. Things get a little trickier here, but many shortcuts are available to keep the realism flowing even if you know very little about planetary engineering, plate tectonics, or global climatology.

Planetary Fudgology 101

It would be great if you could make every world in your campaign realistic and unique, but that isn't possible. Astronomers today are familiar with only one solar system (ours), have first-hand knowledge of only two worlds (Earth and the Moon), and have second-hand knowledge of just over a dozen others. In real life, we know very little about alien planets.

Nonetheless, we have a wealth of real data and SF speculation on what planets around other suns *might* be like. With some research, extremely bizarre but fairly realistic planets (like the hyper-massive "pancake planet" Mesklin, from Hal Clement's classic novel, *Mission of Gravity)* can be invented by any SF referee. But the research required to do this puts a great burden on the GM, and these weird worlds might figure in only one or two adventures per *year.* Very weird planets should be saved for special game adventures, just as unusual desserts should be saved for holidays and other special occasions.

The best path to take in inventing a basic, realistic planet for your campaign is to take an existing planet from real life or from fiction, then recycle it—fiddle with it a bit to make it unique, then drop it into play. Most planetary game adventures take place on worlds very much like Earth. These are the easiest planets to run, since everyone knows what Earth is like and an Earth variant is all the more believable for that fact. It also makes sense to use Earth variants because people would logically colonize worlds like Earth, on which the inhabitants can run around in the open wearing regular clothes, and can grow crops, build cities, and do all of the other things that we are accustomed to doing ourselves.

You obviously don't want every Earth-like world in your galaxy to look just like Earth (how boring), so you can modify certain characteristics of each planet to give it a special quality. Planetary-generation tables in some games, notably GDW's *Traveller* and *Megatraveller* games, do this modification for you, altering the makeup and quality of the air, the amount of water available, the world's size and gravity, and so on. If you are experienced at running science fiction campaigns, you probably create unique Earthlike worlds from habit. It is important to remember, though, that you should always emphasize a world's special features to give an adventure set there more local flavor.

For example, if you have an Earthlike world orbiting a red-dwarf sun, you should think about how someone's color vision will be affected. You might see how things look in a room lit with red lights, such as in a photo developing lab. How do certain colors change? What happens to your night vision? Do you notice how other people look in red light? You might also want to explore questions like: What color would our sky be if the sun were red? What color might local plants be to use photosynthesis? And what would happen to our climate, given that red-dwarf stars are much cooler than yellow stars like our Sun? Once you have this information, use it just often enough to remind the players (and their characters) that this world is not like our own. If the characters enter their starship after being outdoors under a red sun, point out how vivid the surrounding colors look under the "natural" internal lighting of the ship, how white light seems bright and painful to look at for a while, and how comfortable and "normal" the world inside the ship seems compared to the outside landscape.

Science fiction has long supplied a steady stream of Earthlike worlds you can borrow for your campaign. For example, if you need a model for an Earthlike planet on which some major disaster has profoundly altered both nature and culture, you have dozens of models to choose from. Examples of such "disaster worlds" include those which: pollution has wrecked the ecosystem (Philip Wylie's *The End of the Dream,* or Gregory Benford's *Timescape);* atomic and biological warfare has ravaged the land (Andre Norton's *Daybreak: 2250 A.D.,* Alfred Coppel's *Dark December,* Steve Wilson's *The Lost Traveller,* or *Warday,* by Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka); a single biological change destroys the global ecology and culture (John Christopher's *No Blade of Grass,* or George Stewart's *Earth Abides);* a collision with a comet or meteor occurs (*Lucifer's Hammer,* by Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven); an alien race invades (H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds,* or John Wyndham's *Out of the Deeps);* and major climatic changes alter the landscape (John Christopher's *The Long Winter,* or J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World).*

You can also create an Earthlike world that appears much like Earth did thousands, millions, or billions of years ago. Simply check out a few geology or paleontology books about the Ice Ages, the Age of Mammals, the Age of Dinosaurs, the Coal Age, the Precambrian Era, and so on. Science, not science fiction, is your main resource here.

Two very striking Earthlike worlds are offered in Dougal Dixon's speculative books, *After Man* and *The New Dinosaurs. After Man* describes the world ecology and zoology 50 million years from now, given the extinction of humanity; *The New Dinosaurs* projects how life might have evolved if the dino-

saurs had not died out at the end of the Mesozoic era, and had instead continued to exist until the present day.

Beyond the above, you can simply take the Earth and modify any other element you choose to create a new campaign world. What would an Earth-like planet be like if it had only one small continent? What if the world was completely covered with water, or had no water at all? What if the air was almost entirely made up of carbon dioxide, or if no air was present? What if the world was continuously pounded by asteroid strikes? What if the world's orbit was highly eccentric (off center) like a comet's, so that it came in close to its sun, then rushed off deep into space to return again? What if the world had no moons, had many moons, or was part of a double planet?

In every case, be prepared to give little reminders to the characters so that they don't forget how cold it is outside, how humid the air feels, how strange the purple plants look, how breathing unfiltered air burns their lungs, and how darn bright that blue-white sun is overhead. The "alienization" ideas from last issue's *The Living Galaxy* will come in handy here.

Everything that has been said about creating Earthlike planets applies to creating planets like Mars, Venus, or other worlds in our solar system. Over the years, astronomers have had many ideas of what nearby worlds were like; though most of these ideas have been proved wrong, they make excellent resource material for world building in your campaign. Mars, for example, was believed by the astronomer Percival Lowell to be criss-crossed by a series of canals, built by a dying Martian civilization to distribute water from the polar caps. Venus was thought by some to be covered by vast jungles beneath its thick clouds. That both of these ideas were wrong means nothing; you simply pick them up and recycle them.

Indeed, you could borrow worlds and moons from our own solar system and not fiddle with them much at all (aside from renaming them). How many worlds would be stranger than Titan, the largest moon of Saturn, where *Voyager I* scientist Don Hunten guessed that sunlight turns the orange methane atmosphere into octane, so that it rains frozen gasoline? Or Jupiter's moon Io, where huge sulfur volcanoes erupt and constantly alter the moon's surface? The more unfamiliar satellites and planets, with simple name changes, would make excellent locations for space adventures. The Earth's Moon, on the other hand, because it is not quite as "special" as Io or Titan, might serve as a nice guide for creating large airless worlds in many other systems.

For the sake of illustration, three worlds are briefly described in the following sections. Each world is based upon one of three planets in our solar system, though each is modified from the original model. Details are left for the GM to develop as desired; these worlds fit no particular game system, though conversion to any interstellar campaign should be simple.

Birkoff's World

Birkoff's World, mentioned in passing in issue #51, is based on the planet Venus as it would look if it were being terraformed—i.e., engineered to make it liveable for Earthly life. Presently, Venus is a world slightly smaller than Earth, with .91 Earth gravity and (very likely) the same internal composition. However, Venus rotates from west to east, just the opposite of Earth, and has a "day" that is 243 Earth days long (this is longer than Venus' year, which is only 224.7 Earth days long). Venus has a dense carbon-dioxide atmosphere that traps solar heat near its surface, raising the ground temperature to 865°F. The atmosphere is so dense that objects on the surface are subjected to 90 times as much air pressure as you receive right now. Even a slight wind of 2 MPH would push you over, as if you were standing in a thick river. Worse yet, the clouds of Venus are composed of droplets of sulfuric acid, and acid rain destroys instruments on incoming spacecraft. Lightning flashes through the clouds so often that the thunder never ceases. Venus is compared favorably to Hell by many modern astronomers.

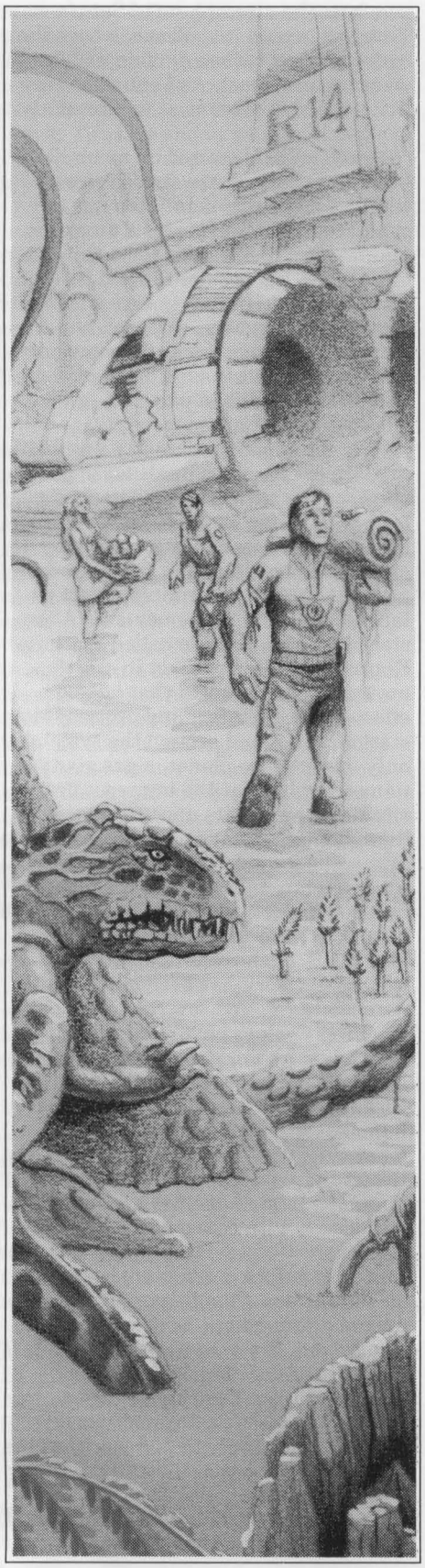
But Hell is merely another challenge to a planetary engineer. James Edward Oberg, in his book *New Earths,* describes some of the very real and serious plans scientists have tossed around over the years to reshape Venus into a second Earth. These require getting rid of its heat and altering its heavy and poisonous atmosphere. Schemes to dump algae into Venus' upper atmosphere, drop icy asteroids onto its surface, surround Venus with light-reflecting parasols, and build enormous flying machines to skim off the excess air are noted, but one of the most interesting ideas is to mine hydrogen from the atmosphere of Saturn or Titan, then ship it to Venus, where the hydrogen and carbon dioxide will form water upon impact. As Venus has very little water at present, it will need all it can get.

Birkoff's World started off much like Venus, having a dense atmosphere of carbon dioxide and being too close to its sun to cool off. We'll give it a more normal rotation of 37 hours and a tiny asteroidal moon, but otherwise we'll leave it like its model. Humanity arrived on the scene a few hundred years ago, and (having nothing better to do) some engineers worked out the means to convert Birkoff's World into a paradise—given lots of time, work, and money.

Birkoff's World is currently uninhabited, except for occasional starship crews who venture down to its surface for scientific purposes. However, there are numerous space stations in orbit around the baked planet, most associated with the terraforming project as laboratories and crew quarters. (A few stations lie near the so-called "Infinite Engine," an alien artifact in orbit around Birkoff's World that has no effect on the terraforming project.) More stations are found around the system's only Jupiter-like planet, a gas giant named Cyclops for the immense orange circular storm in its upper atmosphere (like Jupiter's Red Spot). Cyclops and its numerous icy moons are being mined for hydrogen to be used in the terraforming project; the hydrogen is shipped to Birkoff's World in titanic, kilometer-long loads, then crashed onto the world itself. This work has been going on for many decades, and several very small moons of Cyclops have vanished, dismembered by work crews and robots.

Terraforming has rendered the Birkoff's World's surface suitable for humans with heat-resistant environment suits (the air still is unbreathable. Robotic exploration vehicles are common. The land resembles a mountainous desert, with occasional lakes and seas of sterile, steaming water. It will be centuries before green plants can grow on the surface, though genetically engineered plants might be dropped on the surface one day soon to speed the development of a world ecology.

Adventures: The PCs might be hired or asked to rescue a downed spacecraft on the surface, only to discover that the craft was engaged in illegal activities (there are many political factions working together on the terraforming project, and not all of these groups like



each other). Industrial spies and agitators work among the space mining crews, and drug abuse is a serious problem for bored workers (scenes from the movie *Outland* might appear in the GM's mind now). A misdirected hydrogen shipment might need to be recovered, having sailed into solar orbit away from the planet or it might be on a collision course (by accident?) with another space colony. Stolen explosives, hijacked spacecraft, and other human-spawned terrors will haunt the PCs who become involved with those who call Birkoff's World home.

Portroal

Portroal is one of the "brawny barbarian movie" planets discussed in issue #52. It is based on Earth, but not the Earth we know today. Some 250 million years ago, during the Permian period, Earth's continents were joined together in a supercontinent now called Pangaea, a Greek word meaning "all lands." Pangaea stretched from the South Pole far into the northern hemisphere in a giant, horseshoe-shaped mass.

In the southern interior of Pangaea, the daytime temperatures climbed to 122°F or more, with no chance of rainfall. Tremendous glaciers covered the southern pole, and vast monsoons battered the coasts on every side. The climate was far more extreme than it is today, creating wastelands too hot and arid or too cold to be called habitable. Jungles of bizarre nonflowering plants covered the liveable land areas, and squat amphibians and reptiles made up most of the land life. (The familiar sailback reptile *Dimetrodon* lived during this time.) Some scientists think that the animal life learned to migrate with the seasons to escape the extremes of weather, or else hibernated during the burning summers or freezing winters. The seas were filled with a wide variety of weird fishes (including sharks), mollusks, corals, and squidlike invertebrates.

Because of the extremes in climate, many life forms that entered the Permian period became extinct during that time. The end of the period was marked by volcanic action, mountain building, and the breakup of the supercontinent into two smaller continents; these changes also had their effect on the world's life forms, producing the greatest known mass extinction on record. It was a trying time for all life.

Portroal, too, has a supercontinent with an extreme climate, and it has all of the troubles that plagued the Earth during the Permian period. Portroal also has a number of barbaric humans and aliens, descended from the inhabitants of an interstellar pirate base that came apart under the relentless attacks of hurricanes, diseases, earthquakes, and factional fighting. The world's name, used only by its inhabitants, comes from an ancient human city noted for its sea-pirate activity (Port Royal, Jamaica); this was once the name of the pirate base itself.

Adventurers who visit Portroal will find that the world, which lies far from all major civilized worlds, has little in the way of high technology. No coal and oil fields have been formed, and the inhabitants have no gunpowder. Except for the PCs, the world has had no visitors for centuries. All of its people have reverted to savagery, forming hunter-gatherer tribes in many areas near the old starport (now buried by jungle near an inland river).

The GM should set up about four or five starfaring races as the inhabitants of this prehistoric land, each one skilled at survival and seemingly deadlier at trapping, hunting, and fighting than any other race. (After all, these were pirates to begin with, and not pleasant ones at that.) It would help to skim many current fantasy games for hints on weapons, cultures, and tactics that would make these tribes memorable to any group of jaded adventurers who chose to land here.

Adventures: The PCs, during the course of their normal nosey business, find records of a centuries-old interview with a captured pirate or interstellar criminal who bragged of his home base on a world that no law-abiding starship crew would ever find. The criminal was executed and his words were noted as lies, yet there is other evidence of pirate activity in the region that eventually died away. There are a few legends and tales of this "pirate world," but no real evidence to prove it exists. The PCs might decide to investigate, but the journey to Portroal will be far more difficult than expected. Previous world-hunters were turned aside because of the distance to the pirate base, conflicting legends about its location (deliberately spread by the pirates), and any number of other problems the GM can devise. Assuming the PCs have an edge that no previous group possessed, they might find this world—and its quaint, deadly

inhabitants.

Of course, the PCs might stumble onto this world completely by accident, having entered this system by mistake or as part of a routine exploration by a professional world-scouting corporation that sells data on the location of habitable worlds to colonial groups and interstellar governments. The initial survey party might unexpectedly discover the inhabitants and then attempt to find out how the inhabitants arrived here, so far from any other major world and with no record of colonization attempts made in this area. Finding the ruins of the old starport (seen as sacred taboo ground by all tribes, who will kill to keep its secrets) would be the capstone of the adventure.

Finally, the PCs might just happen to crash-land their starship here, and thus be forced to rough it with the natives (and the carnivorous reptiles, and the hurricanes, and the blast-furnace deserts, and the gigantic glaciers, and so on) until they are rescued. Life is hard sometimes, and so unfair.

Loki

Loki is based on Mars, which is actually a small world. The gravity of Mars is .38 that of Earth, and its atmosphere (mostly made up of carbon dioxide) is so thin that hurricane-force winds would be little noticed by colonists. Yellow sandstorms and dust devils cross the Martian landscape, which is strewn with rocks and orange-red sand dunes. Huge meteorite craters dot the surface, much as they do on our Moon. The temperatures are always cold (−58°F to −220°F), and the air is dry (the air pressure is too low to allow liquid water to form). Feathery cirrus clouds sweep the dark blue-black sky. Planetwide sandstorms have been known to occur, spreading over the world within days and lasting hundreds of days thereafter.

A Martian day is remarkably like our own, being 24 hours and 37 minutes long. Mars also has regular seasons like Earth, but the only significant change between summer and winter is the presence of carbon-dioxide frost over the ground during winter in most areas, with the two polar caps growing in size as the weather chills and shrinking as summer comes.

James Oberg, in his book *New Earths,* points out that though Mars has no free water, there is evidence that ice lies buried under the Martian soil. Some meteorite craters look "muddy," as if the ground where the meteor struck had turned soggy from the impact and "splashed" out. Certain surface features on Mars resemble those found in Iceland, when volcanic eruptions occur through glaciers. Huge cracks in parts of the Martian surface also resemble cracks found on Earth in permafrost.

At various times in Mars' past, huge sections of the land seem to have collapsed and released all of the water buried beneath them. These events were probably caused by underground thermal activity that released huge amounts of water all at once, causing it to flow briefly over the surface in rivers and streams until it froze or evaporated. What if the whole planet were suddenly warmed up? What would happen to all of that buried ice?

Loki is about to find out. Loki's sun was once thought to be stable, but it is suddenly showing signs that it is actually an irregular variable star, making relatively slight changes in its heat and light output. The sun is warming up a bit now, just enough to warm up Loki, too—much to the shock of its inhabitants.

Loki was settled by a mining corporation from a larger inhabited world in the same system. A number of rare minerals are extracted from the planet's vast surface and from shaft mines, though the world has recently fallen on hard times. The population has been falling off for decades, so only a few hundred thousand people are left to work the most valuable mines and hope for better days. Most colonists live in underground cities, shielded from solar and cosmic radiation by thick rock and living off the buried water reserves. Some underground cities have been abandoned and shut down, patrolled only by scavengers and looters.

The only major change we'll make on Loki is to increase its air pressure so that, while the world is still very cold, humans can walk around outdoors wearing only heavy clothing and breathing equipment (like SCUBA gear). The atmosphere is not breathable, being carbon dioxide.

Adventures: The PCs arrive with a shipment of materials for one of the towns, only to receive drastic news from Loki's starports about the increased solar radiation and the danger of sudden flooding as the surface rock warms up, melting the permafrost below. Indeed, several ragged-edged lakes have appeared near Loki's equator and southern hemisphere (where it is summer). One underground city has been struck by flooding, with some loss of life as the permafrost around the city walls became liquid and the walls shifted and broke. The underground cities are evacuating and trying to set up emergency aboveground shelters in rocky areas where no permafrost exists.

The PCs land at a local starport to either deliver their goods or to help with emergency programs—and the starport itself collapses into the ground, with a flood of water gushing up through the cracking soil. The PCs' starship may be washed away, become buried in debris or sunk in water, or be smashed into other ships and buildings as the disaster evolves. The PCs themselves will be in dire straits to stay alive and to rescue other unfortunates who are trying to keep out of the flood.

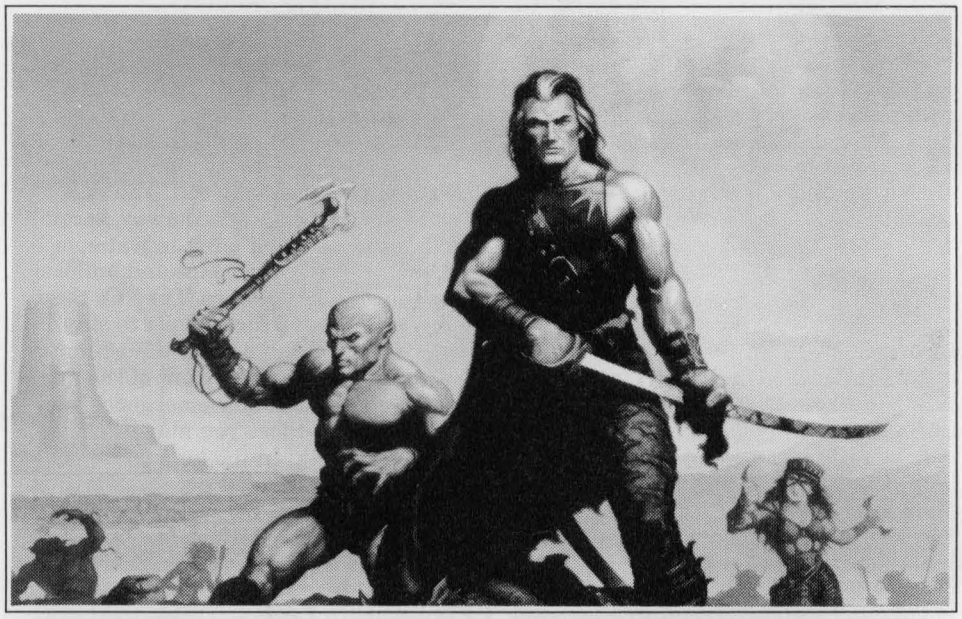
Here is a planetary emergency very much unlike those you may have imagined for Earth. In the long run, Loki's mining industry will not recover from the disaster. But the world will suddenly be more habitable (as long as the sun stays warmer), and colonists might move to this interesting new world now dotted with lakes and seas. (Perhaps some colonists will come from the other inhabited worlds in the system, which might be having problems with the warming sun as well.)

In short, always consider recycling planets to make the most of them. Readers of past editions of this column might find that I used some of the techniques mentioned in issues #52 and #53 to create each of the three world cultures in this article, and some ideas were borrowed from issue #56 for villains (especially on using Mother Nature as a foe for overconfident spacefarers). "Alienization" techniques from issue #57 would be extremely helpful in bringing these worlds to life. Data leading the PCs to each world could be distributed according to the techniques given in issue #51, and the PCs might use unmanned spacecraft mentioned in issues #54-55 to explore these worlds (or to rescue them from each adventure's clutches).

I hope that the tactics and strategies herein are beginning to tie together for players and GMs. As always, your comments are welcome. Please write to: Roger E. Moore, c/o POLYHEDRON Newszine, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. And enjoy. ❑

A New World to Conquer

A quick tour of the DARK SUN™ Campaign



by James M. Ward

My job, directing the designers and editors at TSR, Inc. is a lot of work, but it has its compensations. One of these is watching the birth of a game universe and its unveiling before the public. Such a new universe will appear on September 1st when the DARK SUN™ campaign system goes on sale.

The desert world of the DARK SUN characters campaign is a tough place to live. They have psionic powers and abilities never before seen by role players. The characters also begin with a goal to keep them busy for their entire game lives: saving the world. It seems the use of "normal" magic strips away the life force of the planet. The more wizards there are practicing magic in the old AD&D game way, the more the world becomes dry and lifeless. Powerful sorcerer-kings rule over lush oases dotting the surface of the planet. These mystical rulers use vast amounts of magic to keep their private kingdoms healthy and green. The player characters come into the world knowing they have to act to save the ecology before every city becomes a dried husk.

All the creatures living and hunting in the planet's deserts and under the cities are psionic. All the inhabitants of the DARK SUN world have some type of psionic ability—including all player characters rolled up for the game.

More, more, more is the style of the DARK SUN campaign. In making the DARK SUN world products, TSR is putting more illustrations, more effort, and more design talent than the company previously put into any other game world. Besides more materials, every DARK SUN game product will have a 16-page short story. This tale reveals something important about the product's main theme. A likely story might story deal with a slave who has escaped from a gladiatorial arena. She flees into the desert fully expecting to die and instead discovers an entire culture of escaped arena fighters dedicated to overthrowing the current political system.

The Arena

A thousand screaming fans overflow the arena of Balic. They came to watch fight after fight in the sandy oval of death. For the past hour, the masses thrilled and shouted while huge, dusty, bloody combats between powerful psionic creatures unfolded below. Some of the mental conflicts affected the first few rows in the lower decks, but that is all part of the fun.

The current bout is between a common man with limited mental abilities and a psi-shadow. Objects, both known and unknown, have been strewn about the shadowed arena sands. It is up to the man to make the best use of what he can find to win against the creature of shadow.

The betting board is showing high odds in favor of the death of the human. None of the thousand people—minus the hundred or so who were brain burned in the last bout—are surprised.

Psi-shadow: Int Very; AL CE; AC 0; MV 18; HD 6+6; hp 44; THAC0 13; #AT Variable; Dmg Variable; SA Psionics, surprise, control shadows; SD 90% undetectable, magical weapons or light attacks needed to hit, immune to mind-affecting spells; MR 10%; SZ S; ML 19; XP 4,000

Toveral, the Underling: S 19; I 16; W 12; D 19; C 18; CH 17; AL LG; AC −2; MV 9; HD F3; hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SA Wild talent psionics; SZ M; ML 14; XP 420.

Psionic Abilities: *telekinesis, ballistic attack*

Psionic Strength: 16

Equipment: Shield, club.

Just for the record, I will note that these antagonists are low power, run-of-the-mill beings in the Dark Sun universe. Most novice warriors have abilities and equipment equal to Toveral's. The psi-shadow is typical of intelligent life forms encountered on the planet.

❑

Psi-Shadow

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any/Shadowy areas
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Dusk and twilight
DIET:	Small amounts of light
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1 (1d4)
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	6+6
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	As form
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	As form
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Psionics, surprise, control shadows
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	90% undetectable, magic weapons needed to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%, immune to mind-affecting attacks
SIZE:	S (3' pool) or as form
MORALE:	Fearless (19-20)
XP VALUE:	4000

Psi-Shadows look like inky black, but mundane, shadows. They are in fact from the Plane of Shadow, though they travel in the prime material plane from time to time. Their true body form is a shadowy blob, rather like an ameboid pool of ink. They cannot fly and always must be attached to a surface. However, they can move on any surface. They can travel on walls or ceilings as easily as on floors. They are 90% undetectable in shadows or darkness.

Psi-shadows are not undead and cannot be turned or harmed by holy water. They can speak the language of any form they assume (see "combat"). Otherwise, they cannot communicate.

Combat: Psi-shadows do not have a corporeal form and only spells, magical weapons, and light-producing attacks (see below) can harm them. While in their natural form they are not able to cause physical damage, but they can freely move through tiny openings such as keyholes, cracks, and slits.

They have the ability to assume the form, much like a doppleganger does, of any creature with 6+6 hit dice or less. When using an assumed form, they can no longer pass though tiny openings, but they can deliver the assumed form's physical attacks. The assumed form is only semi-corporeal. The psi-shadow retains a formidable armor class and still is 90% undetectable in shadows and immune to non-magical physical blows. One of their favorite tactics is to lurk in the center of a shadowy hallway and then assume the form of some horrid monster (be sure to describe the transformation for full impact). This causes a −4 penalty on opponents' surprise rolls.

Psi-shadows are extremely susceptible to bright light. Attacks which also produce light cause double damage if applicable (such as lit torches, burning oil, *flame tongue* swords, or *fireballs*). *Continual light,* if cast directly against a psi-shadow, causes the creature to save vs. spell or be destroyed, while *light* and other light-producing spells cause them to save vs. death or suffer 1d8 points of damage per spell level, to a maximum of 4d8.

Psi-shadows are immune to all forms of mental control or attack except for the five psionic attack forms.

Finally, they can mentally control all shadows within a 50-foot radius). These shadows can form any pattern desired (often appearing live and intelligent); they cause no real effects or damage, but all attacks against the psi-shadow suffer a −1 "to hit" penalty due to disorientation.

Psionics:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Attack/Defense	Skill	Points
6	3/see below	EW,II,MT,PB/+3	= Int	250

* Psychometabolism—They know all powers of this discipline
* Psychokinesis—*Devotions:* control flames, control light
* Telepathy—*Devotions:* ego whip, id insinuation, mind thrust, psionic blast

Habitat/Society: Psi-Shadows are guardians of twilight, or any situation which produces shadows. They prefer a little light, enough to cast shadows, but not enough to chase the darkness away. They become hostile toward anyone who threatens the shadows they guard. Psi-shadows are strictly individuals with territorial domains. The only time these borders can be crossed is when they need aid in protecting their shadows. Thus, 1d4 psi-shadows can be encountered.

Psi-shadows have an unusually powerful version of the life draining devotion. Any human, demi-human, or humanoid reduced to 0 hit points through life draining—and any such victim who is freshly dead to begin with—becomes an undead shadow under control of the psi-shadow. A psi-shadow's life draining devotion works normally in all other respects. It is common to find 1d6 shadows serving a psi-shadow. Sages theorize psi-shadows were the original cause of all undead shadows.

Ecology: A psi-shadow's only use for riches is in producing more shadows. The creature's treasure usually will be found spread around the lair in little mounds which the creature hopes will lure greedy victims into its clutches. Once destroyed, a psi-shadow vanishes and all of its undead servant shadows become free willed.

A Friend In Need

An AD&D® Game Adventure for Six Unusual Characters

Illustration by Laura Kagawa

by Jim Wade and Michael Selinker

Adventure Background

Romance is alive (but not altogether well) in the Land of Avalon. Good Prince Gallant has declared the most beautiful woman in the land will become his bride.

Alas, the handsome prince knew that he could not possibly view all of the women to decide who was the fairest. His despair turned to joy, however, when the sorceress Esmerelda invited him to her tower to scan the princedom's lovelies with her magical mirror. He and his retinue cut through the Peaceful Forest on their way to her tower, and stopped to rest by a sparkling pond. Night would soon fall, and a mighty storm was brewing, so the prince decided to take a swim before the rain came. Unbeknownst to him, the dryad Mahogany had also come to the pond's edge to bathe. When the handsome prince swam to Mahogany's bank, the two were captivated by each other, staring at each other longingly, the prince's charms enchanting Mahogany almost as much as hers attracted him. Neither noticed the coming of the storm. When the first thundercrack resounded, Mahogany told her smitten prince that they must hurry back to her tree. But at that moment, the loudest thunderclap was heard, and Mahogany collapsed in Gallant's arms.

What Gallant did not know was that Mahogany's tree, also named Mahogany, had been struck by lightning. The lightning severed a major branch on the tree, and through their symbiosis, felled the dryad. Not knowing the dryad was anything but a woman with red hair (the season being autumn), the prince quickly brought Mahogany back to his camp. He noted the vicious burn on her shoulder, but did not understand its source, as he had not seen lightning strike his sweetheart. The prince and his retainers decided to hie to the sorceress at once, for she could certainly cure the fallen beauty. As they went further from the dryad's tree, however, the dryad became sicker and sicker, falling into unconsciousness.

When the retinue reached Esmerelda's tower, the prince threw himself on the mercy of the sorceress. He would pay any riches, he swore, to have the lithesome lass restored to health.

Esmerelda agreed, but she had a much more sinister plot in mind, for she, too, wished to become his bride. Though beautiful herself, Esmerelda could not tear his eyes from the stricken dryad. She resolved to capture the prince's heart by concocting a *philter of love*, an elixir for which she required the hair of a dryad. With the prince's permission, she snipped a lock of Mahogany's hair, promising a potion that would heal all her ills. While the prince waited in sorrow by the dying dryad's bed, the evil sorceress began to brew a draught that would steal his heart forever.

Mahogany's only hope lies with a group of her friends who have come to visit her for a fine morning picnic. Though anything but adventurers, this group of woodland creatures must return Mahogany to her tree by shortly after sundown or she will die. Mahogany's friends are Cassius, the centaur; Thistledown, the sprite; Glimmerwing, the sylph (and Mahogany's half-sister); Dylandwyriel, the wood elf; Cygnythia, the swanmay; and Benthroewyn, the werebear.

Mahogany and Mahogany

Mahogany is both a dryad and a massive oak tree. They share a symbiotic relationship. Mahogany is 200 years old, as evidenced by the size of the tree. The dryad is an extension of the oak tree's soul, and as such cannot survive if the tree dies or she is taken too far away from the tree itself. The dryad only can go 360 yards from the tree without feeling ill effects. The 360 yard radius is called the terel. Within five rounds of leaving the terel, the dryad rapidly suffers exhaustion, starvation, and depression. She will die in 6-36 hours if nothing is done.

If the tree is destroyed, the dryad will die, which is why Esmerelda has sent her gargoyle minions to find the tree and destroy it.

For more information see *The Ecology of the Dryad,* an article by Shaun Wilson that appeared in DRAGON® Magazine issue #87, July 1984.

Mahogany, the dryad: Int Exceptional; AL N; AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spells; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 12; XP 1,400.

Spell-like powers as 9th level priest at will: (Level One) *detect snares and pits, entangle, locate animals,* (Level Two) *charm person or mammal* x3, *locate plants, trip,* (Level Four) *plant door, speak with plants,* (Level Five) *commune with nature, pass plant*

The Peaceful Forest

The Peaceful Forest is a massive woods in the land of Avalon, the princedom of Good Prince Gallant. The inhabitants include several clans of elves (wood, high, and valley), a tribe of sprites, and several camps of centaurs. Some of the more exotic residents, such as sylphs, dryads, and lycanthropes, tend to live alone. There are a number of monsters in the forest, but none of major power (such as dragons, giants, thessalhydrae, and so forth). There are no organized bands of humanoids in the forest.

The forest is temperate; in the autumn, the temperature is a comfortable 70 degrees. There are hundreds of encounters possible in every mile, as birds, squirrels, and plants are everywhere.

There are only two permanent buildings in the mapped section of the forest. One is Esmerelda's tower, which is location 9. The other is Benthroewyn's shack, where the PCs started this morning. There is nothing there that would help the PCs, as Ben lives rather simply. He brought his cooking pot and his picnic basket, which are the most interesting things he owns.

The PCs begin near Mahogany, the tree (1). From there, they should hear the fighting (2) between some centaurs and Esmerelda's gargoyles, who have come to level the tree. After perhaps going to the centaurs' cave (3), the PCs may go to Prince Gallant's abandoned camp (4), where the brownies Fudge and Nut frolic. From there, they should trail the prince's horsemen to Esmerelda's tower. On the way they will have an encounter with some needlemen (5), and then with Ollie Ogre (6), who is looking for his brother Eugene. Eugene will meet the PCs in the forest (7). The PCs should follow the prince to the edge of the forest, and then north along the treeline to the tower (8). There, they should meet the prince's retinue, and go inside the tower (9) to face Esmerelda.

Tracking Mahogany is difficult, since time and rain have washed away most signs of her trail to the pond. Cygnythia's chance to track the prince's party is 10.

Players' Introduction

Once upon a time, in a magical land called Avalon, there were seven friends who lived in the Peaceful Forest in the land ruled by Good Prince Gallant. There was Cassius, a noble centaur; Dylandwyriel, the wood elf, who could play beautiful songs all day long; Cygnythia, a stunning woman whose magical collar of swan feathers allowed her to turn into a graceful swan; Benthroewyn, a gentle man who could cast spells of healing and could also turn into a giant bear; and Glimmerwing, a pretty sylph whose butterfly wings carried her to the treetops. And there also was Thistledown, a sprite who could disappear and fly just like Glimmerwing. Last of all, there was Mahogany, the beautiful dryad who lived in a tree that was also named Mahogany.

The friends were happy, and though they lived some distance from one another, they frequently got together for picnics and frolicking. One morning in early autumn, all the friends, except Mahogany, were gathered at Benthroewyn's spartan hut. The friends had to gather here because they knew Mahogany could not travel far from her beloved tree, for if she wandered more than a thousand feet from it, she would get sick and die with the setting of the sun.

As evening neared, a fierce rainstorm struck the area, and thunder shook the house. The friends were worried that the next day would be gloomy. But in the morning, the clouds had disappeared, the sun shone brightly, and fresh dew was on the leaves. Smiling, the friends packed a big picnic basket and set off for Mahogany's tree. After a brisk walk through the woods, the friends neared Mahogany's tree. And there they found the damaged oak.

1. The Wounded Oak

The PCs begin the round coming through the trees that surround the big oak. Morning dew is still on the ground, but the birds and animals in the area are skittish. The PCs get a feeling that all is not right, a feeling emanating from the tree.

The PCs see a sad sight. The big oak is still there, resplendent in its red and

brown leaves. But a large section of the top leaves and a major branch are lying among the undergrowth. Careful examination of the huge branch shows that it was cleaved off, and is seared at the break. The tree shows similar signs. Birds, animals, and other plants in the area know that the tree was struck by lightning, and that a big crash was heard when the branch hit the ground. Nothing further can be determined unless the tree is questioned, via a *speak with plants* spell. There are, of course, no other druids or dryads in the area, so the only such spell the PCs have is on Benthroewyn's scroll.

If *speak with plants* is cast, the cleric will hear the tree saying "Mahogany" and "Ouch" in long syllables. Mahogany will answer questions, but clearly is in great pain. When conversing, Mahogany speaks very slowly, roughly one syllable every five seconds. It wants to know where its dryad is, for she is needed to tend its wounds. The oak can explain all of the information in the "Mahogany and Mahogany" section, though even a brief summary will take several hours. The dryad is not dead or exorcised. Most importantly, the tree will say that if Mahogany has left the terel and does not return by "no-more-sun," the dryad will die, leaving the tree soulless. The tree does not have the same perception of time as the PCs, so it only knows that Mahogany left during "water," and that "pain" happened during "water" as well. When "sun" came, she was not in the tree. She has not responded to the tree's calls. The PCs cannot help the tree. Cure spells will be useless, as the cleric should know. The tree will encourage the PCs to look for Mahogany, the dryad.

Mahogany's treasure cache is buried in the tree's roots. It contains a thick leather stringbag with 250 gp and 10 gems worth an average of 50 gp each. The tree knows where the bag is, but will not take kindly to the PCs digging it up.

About 20 minutes after the PCs begin their search, they hear a crashing sound. See Encounter 2.

Mahogany (in its present state): Int Exceptional; AL N; AC 2; MV 0; HD 20; hp 120 (60); THAC0 Nil; #AT 0; Dmg 0; SZ H (70') XP Nil.

2. The Winged Woodsmen

The thrashing comes from a fight between three centaurs and four gargoyles. The centaurs include Cassia and her children, Claudius and Cassandra. They were out gathering berries for Cassia's sick mate, Chiron. The gargoyles—Grewsum, Ugli, Grotesk, and Meen—are all carrying hatchets. They have been sent by Esmerelda to find and chop down the dryad's tree. They are looking for a big oak tree near a pond, and have already taken their axes to a couple of likely candidates. They have not finished chopping any down, however, because they were distracted by the arrival of the centaurs.

The PCs are drawn into this encounter when Claudius crashes through the bushes, hurtling headlong into the party. The boy cries, "Help! They're going to kill my mother and sister!" Claudius is bleeding from a wound to his shoulder. Right on his tail is a gray-skinned, muscular creature with sharp claws, teeth, and a horn on its head, wielding a hatchet. Its wings get tangled in some branches as it emerges from the trees. Seeing the PCs, the gargoyle shouts, "You tell Grewsum where be tree!" and rushes to attack.

One of Grewsum's claw attacks is replaced by a hatchet swipe. He is certain that the PCs cannot hurt him, but if they do, he may try to flee toward the other gargoyles. He cannot really fly in the forest because of all the branches.

If rescued, Claudius will be thankful but will resist attempts at healing until his mother and sister are saved. The PCs may intervene any way they desire.

If the PCs defeat or drive away the gargoyles, the centaurs will be pleased. The mother centaur is concerned about her children, and will demand that they be healed before her. Unless she is severely wounded, she will not be concerned about her own injuries. She is more worried about her husband and the spilled bowl of berries she was bringing to him. Chiron is lying in their cave, suffering from some disease she does not understand. The cave is at point 3, about 15 minutes away. If she knows the PCs have a healer, she will entreat him to help Chiron. If the PCs refuse to help, let them continue on their way.

Cassia: Int Average; AL CG; AC 5; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 20; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; SA SZ L; ML 13; XP 175.

Claudius: Int Average; AL CG; AC 5; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 14 (9); THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; SA SZ L; ML 12; XP 120.

Cassandra: Int Average; AL CG; AC 5; MV 18; HD 2; hp 10; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; SA SZ L; ML 12; XP 120.

Grewsum, Ugli, Grotesk, and Meen: Int Low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9, Fl 15 (C); HD 4+4; hp 24 each; THAC0 17; #AT 4; Dmg 1-3/1-4/1-6/1-4 (one claw attack replaced with axe attack); SD +1 or better weapon or 4+1 or more hit dice to hit; SZ M; ML 11; XP 650 each.

3. The Centaur Cave

If the PCs follow Cassia and her children back to her cave, they see a very muscular centaur shivering beneath a blanket on a bed of leaves. He is afflicted with a form of horsepox, which, fortunately for his family, is not contagious. It makes him lethargic and unable to move very far. He is unable to talk. Benthroewyn could use his *cure disease* ability on Chiron, but it will take 1d4 days to have full effect. However, Chiron will feel slightly revitalized at once if it is cast, and he will be able to walk and talk.

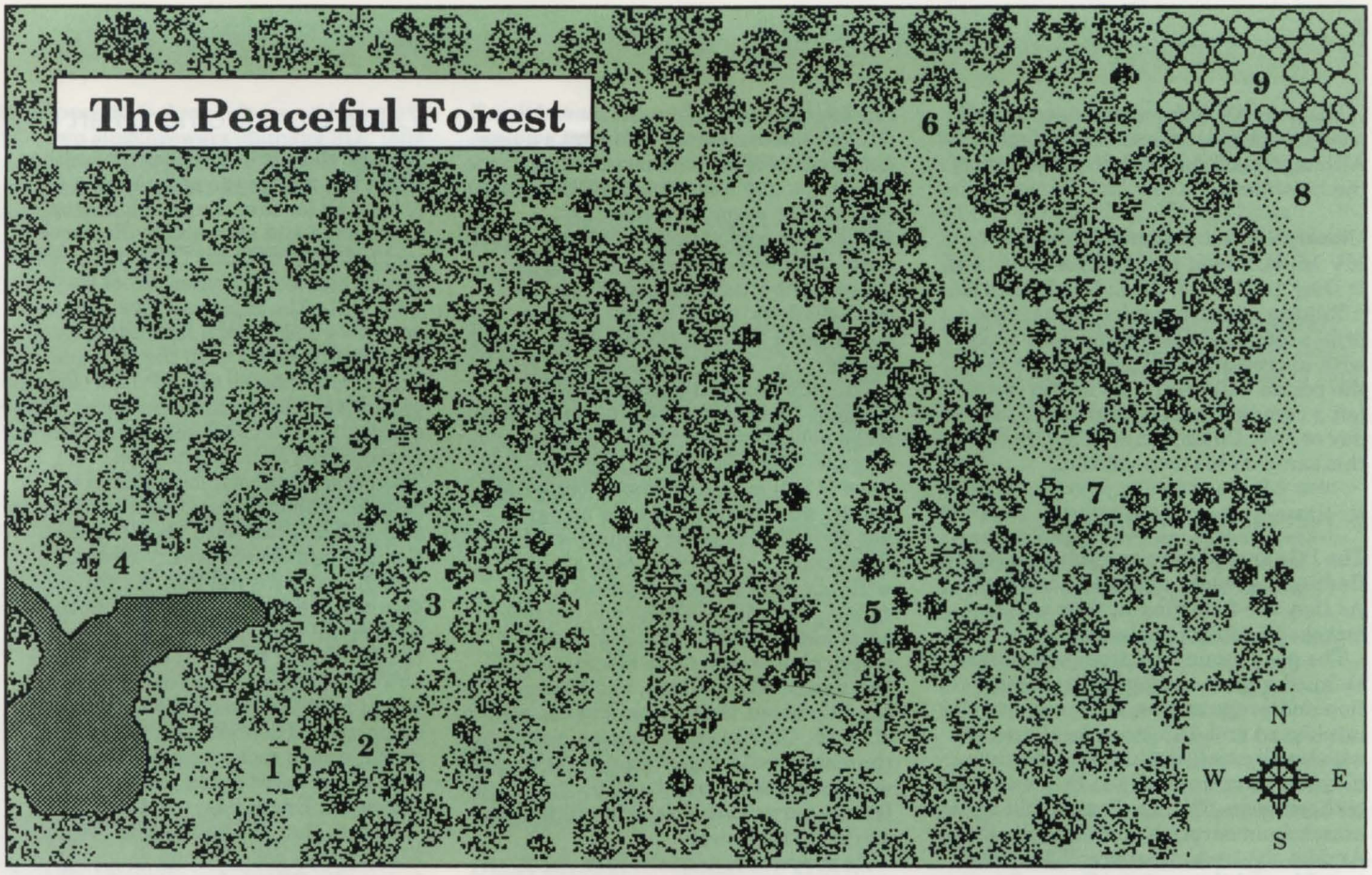
In return, the centaurs reveal they noticed the remains of a deserted human encampment. Cassia will offer to guard the dryad's tree while the PCs are gone.

Chiron: Int Average; AL CG; AC 5; MV 18; HD 4; hp 28 (18); THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-8 (morning star); SA SZ L; ML 13; XP 175.

4. The Prince's Camp

If the PCs journey to the camp the centaurs mentioned, they can find it easily; it is next to the large pond where the prince and Mahogany met. The centaurs' tracks are evident here, but the rain last night destroyed the prince's trail to the campsite. However, the prince's trail from the campsite to Esmerelda's tower is easier to discern.

From a distance, the prince's camp seems deserted—just like the centaurs said. It is a collection of eight tents, one much larger than the rest. The tents contain two or three cots each, except the prince's; it contains a temporary bed with a heavy blanket. It also contains a mirror, a chest of clothing, and a spare royal robe. A number of cots have been turned over, one of the tents has collapsed, and equipment is scattered all about. Currently, the camp has three inhabitants: Fudge and Nut, the brownies, and a warhorse. Fortunately, the



PCs arrive just as the brownies figure out a whizbang way to use this leftover equipment.

As the PCs approach, they hear clanking and a horse's whinny. Those flying overhead see a knight in full plate armor and royal robes on his horse, ready to ride out. The knight is kicking the horse into ungainly movement. Of course, the suit of armor contains only Fudge and Nut, with Fudge controlling the suit's arms and Nut moving the legs. If Fudge and Nut see or hear someone to play with, they move the horse toward them and stand defiantly to let the majesty of the royal robes, armor, and horse sink in. Fudge uses his *ventriloquism* to declare in a low voice, "Oho, evil varlets! Thy base magics do not impress one with my fantastical knightly virtues! Behold and tremble!"

After this impressive outburst, Nut kicks a bootspur into the horse's side, causing it to whinny and charge forward. The knight appears to wobble as Fudge spins the horseman's mace in the suit's right gauntlet. As the horse gets closer, Fudge's twirling of the mace causes it and the gauntlet to fly off. Suddenly off balance, Fudge crashes into the left side of the breastplate, knocking the helmet and torso armor off the horse. The horse, still attached to the armor leggings, gallops away. The helmet and torso separate, with "oofs" and "oohs" coming from the breastplate. Momentarily, two brownies stagger out, clutching their heads from dizziness. A blow to the mounted armor results in the same spectacle, and will not damage the brownies.

After getting their bearings, the brownies introduce themselves: "I'm Fudge!" "I'm Nut!" "We're heroes!" and so forth. Fudge and Nut are boyfriend and girlfriend, and are brave heroes—at least by their own reckoning. They mean no harm, as they are just out to have a little fun. They talk constantly, overlapping their speech and finishing each other's sentences.

They are out to see the world, and came here by secretly hitching a ride with this prince's party. They woke up when the storm began to rage, and saw the prince carry in a "bee-you-ti-ful woman." If pressed about what happened, they say the prince brought the woman into camp and everybody stood around her and shook their heads back and forth. (They will imitate.) The men decided to take her to the sorceress, whoever that is. Then everybody jumped on all the horses but one and rode away, leaving Fudge and Nut alone in the camp. They have found lots of neat things to play with, but must soon get about with their dragon slaying.

The brownies can provide information about the prince, his retinue, the woman, and their many travels. They are, however, prone to much exaggeration. If the PCs talk the brownies into coming along, they will find that the two are more trouble than they are worth.

The tracks of the prince's horsemen will be easy to find. Cygnythia can track the group, though she must check every hour (modified tracking score, 10) to see if she loses the trail.

Fudge and Nut: Int High; AL LG; AC 3; MV 12; HD ½; hp 3 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA spells; SD Never surprised, invisible in natural surroundings; SZ S 1½'; ML 11; XP 175 each.

Fudge and Nut save as 9th level clerics; use natural cover to become invisible; speak Brownie, Common, Elvish, Halfling, Pixie, and Sprite; and cast spells as a 9th level magic-user. Each has the following spells:

Ventriloquism, dancing lights, protection from evil, continual light, mirror image (3 images), *confusion,* and *dimension door.*

The prince's spare mount is a white heavy warhorse named Champion. Although good-natured, it is not fond of the brownies.

Champion: Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SZ L; ML 7; XP 120.

Talking with Champion reveals the prince took the woman and rode away with his retinue. Champion knows that the prince will return, as he has never left a camp untended for more than a day or two. Champion will not leave this camp on his own volition.

5. Needleman Ambush

The PCs should have minimal trouble finding the tracks of the prince's party. As they are following it, they will be attacked by four needlemen.

The needlemen look like light green-skinned humans suffering from starvation and acupuncture. They are actually intelligent and disagreeable plants, which will smell the elvish and sylvan blood flowing through the PCs' veins—it bothers them. The needlemen will try to attack from surprise and from all sides. Amidst the trees, they are 75% undetectable and the party suffers a -7 to its surprise chance. This decreases to -4 if Cygnythia is leading the party in human form, and -1 if she is in swan form.

The needlemen fire 1-6 needles each round. Each needle can fly up to 20' and causes 1-2 points of damage. Note that Thistledown is immune to the needles, but not to squeezing and punching attacks (1-4 points of damage). Anyone attacking the needlemen hand-to-hand will also take this damage. Though they are immune to spells which only affect mammals, such as *charm person*, the needlemen take triple damage from damage-causing spells. They only can be communicated with through a *speak with plants* spell.

The needlemen have no treasure, as they are a nomadic band.

Needlemen: Int Low; AL N; AC 6; MV 9; HD 3+4; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1 or 1-6; Dmg 3-12 or 1-2; SA fire needles 20', 75% undetectable in the forest, -5 to opponents surprise rolls if undetected; SZ M; ML 12; XP 120 each.

6. The Ogre Brothers, Part I

Ollie Ogre is looking for his older brother Eugene. He and Eugene always pal around together, but lately Eugene has been hanging out with some dame. Ollie doesn't understand this; it's a fine kettle of chickens when a gal comes between a guy and his buddy, Ollie thinks. The dame, of course, is Esmerelda, and she came between them with a *charm monster* spell. Ollie doesn't know this; he just misses the good old days, when he and Eugene would bash through the forest like ogres should.

The PCs hear Ollie calling to his brother. "Yooooooo-gene!" he yells, as he looks behind trees and under rocks for Eugene. If the PCs follow the calls, they see a 9' tall muscular humanoid with yellow skin. He is definitely an ogre, but he will not appear menacing. If the PCs attack him, he will rush at them with his club. If they approach him calmly, however, he demands to know what happened to Eugene. He speaks in a very gruff voice. Ollie is very stupid and easily manipulated, and he can tell the PCs about the woman Eugene went off with. Ollie is sexist, but no more than one would expect an ogre to be. He will go out of his way to be polite to female party members, but will ignore anything they say.

He cooperates with the PCs if they agree to help him locate Eugene. He is having trouble finding the tower where he last saw Eugene. Ollie does not know a *hallucinatory terrain* has been cast over the area, nor would he understand it even if it were explained to him a few dozen times. If the PCs go with him, he demands to be the leader. He will have lots to talk about along the way, especially about things he and Eugene have bashed. Every now and then a tear will well in his eye for his long lost brother. As ogres go, Ollie is very nice, which means he probably won't try to eat any of the PCs.

The PCs, of course, are free to let Ollie go off on his own. In this event, Eugene will find the PCs shortly after Ollie leaves. See the next encounter.

Ollie Ogre carries a stone club; a belt pouch filled with 35 gold pieces is on his waist. Ollie's command of Common is fair, but he is more fluent in Ogrish, Troll, Orcish, and Stone Giant, the last of which Benthroewyn speaks.

Ollie: Int Low; AL CN(E); AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8+2 (strength bonus); SZ L; ML 12; XP 175.

7. The Ogre Brothers, Part II

Eugene Ogre is looking for his brother Ollie, but not for the same reason Ollie is looking for him. Eugene has been *summoned* and *charmed* by Esmerelda, and is trying to enlist Ollie in the sorceress' service. Whether or not they are with Ollie, the PCs hear "Awwww-lee! Awwwww-lee!" and a familiar tromping. If Ollie is not with the PCs and they allow Eugene to find them, Eugene gives them the same third degree. However, he will be much less polite. On the slightest provocation, he says, "Esmerelda warned me about you tree things!" and attacks. If calmed, Eugene still will be gruff with the PCs, as Esmerelda's charm is very strong.

If Ollie is with the PCs, he will run through the trees to meet his brother, hooting all the way. Eugene will return the hoots, and they will embrace each other. They perform an ogrish chant which involves some intricate hand slapping and sounds like: "Ooog a rocka, ooog a rocka, ook bokka booga rocka!" repeated three times. However, afterward Eugene says in Common, "Enough that kid stuff, Ollie, we gots real work ta do!" Eugene demands to know why Ollie is hanging around with the "evil tree thingies." Eugene will not forgo his new loyalty to Esmerelda, despite Ollie's complaints about "dat dame you ben hangin round wit." If Eugene fights the PCs, Ollie will, too. Eugene wields a huge battle axe.

Of course, Eugene has been to Esmerelda's tower and knows that it has been covered by an illusion of a forest, which he has been told not to touch. He has seen the humans and their horses gathered around the tower, but does not know why they are there. Eugene is looking for Ollie without Esmerelda's knowledge.

Eugene: Int Low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 33; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12+2 (strength bonus); SZ L; ML 12; XP 175.

8. The False Forest

Esmerelda has cast a *hallucinatory terrain* spell over the area around her tower, making the land appear as continuous forest. The *terrain* affects a 110' square area, but Esmerelda has sculpted the effect so that a 70' square clearing in the center. To find the edge of the *terrain*, Cygnythia must track the horseshoe prints, where they abruptly

disappear. If Cygnythia makes a successful tracking check, she can tell that the abrupt ending has no *physical* cause. If anyone touches the *terrain,* it disappears, alerting everyone within. The PCs only can avoid dispelling the effect by going above the 70′ high tree line and coming down the hole in the center, as the gargoyles will have done if they survived their tree-cutting expedition.

Inside the *hallucinatory terrain* clearing are the prince's sixteen soldiers and seventeen horses. All of the soldiers have been ordered by the prince to stay put and be ever vigilant against those who would steal his princess away. It is hard for them to be vigilant, though, as all of them have colds from riding and sleeping in the rain all night. Despite this grumbling, they are unswervingly loyal to Prince Gallant, and will defend him with their lives.

If the forest suddenly disappears, they will assume they are under attack and take up arms. They will be very suspicious of anyone who comes to the tower—and especially suspicious of the PCs because of their appearance.

Two sergeants direct the troops to stand between the party and the tower. They will tell the PCs to go away, then fire a volley of arrows if they do not. They will not chase the party into the real woods. If the sergeants are neutralized, the regulars will become disorganized. They can be dealt with in many ways, the most obvious being *charm* and *sleep* magic. The PCs also may try to bluff their way past the soldiers, but they will have to be very convincing to fool the skeptical sergeants.

If the PCs attack the soldiers, one will try to rush inside to warn the prince. However, Good Prince Gallant is magically asleep inside the tower.

The soldiers are at the locations marked "M" on the detail map, and the sergeants are located at the positions marked "S." Each is dressed in chain mail and carries a long sword, composite short bow, quiver of arrows, shield, and dagger. Their mounts are medium war horses, and are at locations marked "H" on the map. The prince's mount is a white, heavy war horse named Hero, at location PH.

Sergeants (2): Int Very; AL N(G); AC 4; MV 9; HD F1; hp 8 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SZ M; ML 13; XP 65 each.

Soldiers (14): Int Average; AL N(G); AC 4; MV 9; HD 1-1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SZ M; ML 10; XP 35 each.

Horses (16): Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-3; SZ L; ML 7; XP 65 each.

Hero: Int Animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 26; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SZ L; ML 7; XP 120.

If the PCs fly above the *hallucinatory terrain,* Edgar, Esmerelda's raven familiar, will see them. Edgar is a vicious bird, contemptuous of most beings. He cackles once, then goes in his entrance in the tower roof and warns Esmerelda.

Edgar: Int Very; AL N(E); AC 7; MV 1, Fl 36 (B); HD ½; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA 10% chance to poke out an eye on any hit; SZ S (2′ wingspan); ML 9; XP 35.

Esmerelda

Esmerelda lives in her tower with a few magical beasts, including the gargoyles met earlier. If the PCs wish to thwart her, they must fight her here. Esmerelda knows the PCs are coming, as she has been warned by the gargoyles (especially if they did not return), Eugene, the dispelling of the *hallucinatory terrain,* the prince's men, Edgar, or all of them. Depending on how early she received a warning, she may have used her *magical mirror* to watch the PCs' progress and assess their strength.

Esmerelda: S 8; I 17; W 14; D 16; C 15; CH 15; AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; HD W11; hp 39; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SZ M; ML 15; XP 5,000.

Spells carried: (Level One) *magic missile, shocking grasp, unseen servant,* (Level Two) *darkness 15′ radius, web, wizard lock* x2, (Level Three) *clairaudience, dispel magic, phantasmal force, protection from normal missiles,* (Level Five) *animal growth, passwall*

Esmerelda is a beautiful elven woman who dresses in black. She does not appear elven, as her small pointed ears are covered by long white hair. She carries a packet of *dust of appearance,* an *amulet of proof against detection and location,* a *ring of feather falling,* a *ring of spell storing,* (see the paragraph on Esmerelda's tactics for the spells contained within), a black *cloak of protection +3,* and a silver dagger. She has other items in the tower, including various potions and a *broom of flying* in the roof vestibule. Her high elven abilities give her a 90% resistance to sleep and charm, 60′ infravision and normal elven chances to move silently and find secret doors. She speaks Common, Elvish, Gnoll, Gnome, Goblin, Halfling, Hobgoblin, Ogrish, and Orcish.

If attacked in the tower, her tactics will depend on the PCs' method of entrance. To Esmerelda, the PCs are only an annoyance. Her main goal is to gain the prince's love through the potion she has not yet finished brewing. Accordingly, she will do nothing to jeopardize his opinion of her as a kindly witch. When the PCs near the tower, Esmerelda will first cast her *unseen servant* and have it draw the shutters and lock all the windows. Next, she will give the prince a magical, poisoned apple to cast him into a deep *sleep.*

If the PCs ask for an audience, she meets them in the entrance, says the prince is occupied, and tells them to leave at once. She slams the door, *wizard locks* it, and prepares her defenses as detailed below.

If the PCs try to attack the tower from the ground, Esmerelda gives the *unseen servant* her packet of *dust of appearance* and has it hover over the doorway. She casts *protection from normal missiles* on herself, followed by *clairaudience,* to monitor the PCs' actions. If the PCs break down the door and enter, the servant will sprinkle the *dust* over them, revealing any invisible characters for 2-20 turns. Esmerelda next casts *web* over the PCs and opens the trap door to the basement, releasing three huge spiders. The spiders cannot move into the magical *web.* However, they can walk along the outside of the *web* and will attack the PCs as they emerge from it. Esmerelda will not wait around to watch the combat, preferring to set up her next trap.

If the PCs enter through the roof, or Esmerelda escapes up the stairs, she will open the door to her catbox chamber. Inside the small chamber are five housecats, all black. She casts *animal growth* on them and directs them to attack the PCs. In further rounds, she casts and maintains a *phantasmal force* of 10 more semi-giant cats, so PCs will have only a 33% chance of hitting one of the real cats.

The PCs have other methods of entrance, including using the sylph's *Nolzur's marvelous pigments* to create a door or window. They also can combine

a number of tactics, and the Dungeon Master must adapt Esmerelda's strategies to fit the situation. Her overall goal in fighting the PCs is to trap the flying creatures inside and the landbound creatures outside, neutralizing their own best abilities. If she still has a *wizard lock* spell left, she may use this to forcibly separate the party, having each group fight some of her pets. If the fight begins to go against her, she runs to the roof vestibule and mounts her *broom,* shouting, "I'll get you another time." She flies cackling into the wind, though the PCs may still fight her there. She has six *magic missiles* and a *shocking grasp* spell in reserve on a *ring of spell storing*, but will be loath to use them except as a last resort. She can use her *darkness* and *passwall* spells to escape, although she will only damage or abandon her tower in the direst of circumstances. If Esmerelda casts a spell while on her *broom,* she must make a Dexterity check. A failed roll means she has fallen from her *broom.* She can recall the *broom* to her, however. In addition, if a PC successfully attacks Esmerelda on her *broom,* she must make a Dexterity check or fall.

Esmerelda's Tower

The stone tower is 40' in diameter, with a 5' wide stairwell with landings ringing the inside rooms. There are windows on the landings, but none in the rooms. The windows all can be shuttered and locked from the inside. Every interior room above the cellar has several well-placed *continual light* spells for illumination.

There are several permanent *wizard locks* on various doors; PCs with magic resistance may be able to negate these.

The first floor has one entrance, the front door. The double doors are not normally *wizard locked*, but can be locked physically. The entire floor is taken up by the entrance hall, which contains three plush chairs, a coat rack, a small table with two wooden chairs and alternating black and white wall hangings. Stairs lead up around the tower, which Cassius can navigate with his *horseshoes of surefootedness.* The floor is partially carpeted by an ornate rug with designs of lightning flashes. The rug covers a *wizard locked* trap door to the cellar.

The cellar is one room with a ramp leading down from the trap door. It used to contain wooden crates, wine casks and furniture, but the three huge spiders which live here have pretty much eaten it all. They are Esmerelda's pets, and they cannot open the trap door. However, if it is opened, they will rush out and attack anyone except Esmerelda.

Huge spiders (3): Int Animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA poison, surprise on a 1-5; SZ M; ML 8; XP 270 each.

Victims who do not save vs. the poison attack take an additional 1-6 points of damage.

There are 8 gp, 7 sp, and 15 cp scattered throughout the cellar, which has a 6' ceiling.

The second floor contains a full stairwell circle and three rooms: the alchemistry, the catbox chamber, and the library. All of the doors to these rooms are *wizard locked.* The alchemistry is where Esmerelda brews all her poisons and potions. A massive black cauldron has something foul steaming in it, with animal remains floating therein. On a table containing numerous beakers and alembics are some of the ingredients for a *philter of love*; the most notable components of which are several locks of Mahogany's red hair laid neatly on a sheet of vellum. There are also jars containing eye of newt, wing of bat, and fillet of fenny snake. Books on alchemy are spread throughout, one of which is open to the recipe for a *philter of love.* It begins: "This bewitching elixir will encircle the heart of even the most handsome prince around your little finger. . . ." Also in the room can be found a *potion of extra-healing, philter of persuasiveness,* and a *poison apple.* The apple is bright red and if completely eaten has the effect of a *suggestion* spell. If only a bite is consumed, the eater instead falls into a deep sleep for 4-40 turns. The sleeper can be awakened by a kiss from a comely member of the opposite sex.

Behind the *wizard locked* door, the catbox chamber contains Esmerelda's five pet cats, as well as scratching posts and some torn up upholstery. A silver tray with milk bowls and scraps of meat is in the corner. The cats love their mistress Esmerelda, but they tend to hate anyone else. If Esmerelda casts an *animal growth* on them, it lasts 11 rounds.

Cats (5): Int Animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15 (18); HD 1-1 (1+2); hp 3 each (6 each); THAC0 20; #AT 2 (3); Dmg 1-2/1 (1-2/1-2/1-2); SZ S; ML 10; XP 15 each (35 each).

Statistics in parentheses refer to the cats after receiving the *animal growth* spell.

The library also is guarded by a *wizard lock* because it contains Esmerelda's spell books. Also in this room are various books on gathering spell components. On a long table is a *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic,* and a book on woodland creatures, entitled *Mean Things You Can Do To Forest Denizens.* It is open to a page on dissection of dryads, which contains most of the generic information in the "Mahogany and Mahogany" section. Many of the other books in the library have the same tone: *How To Be A Really Evil Wizard, Undead As Conversational Partners,* and *Poisons You Can Concoct.* This last contains the details on the *poison apple.* The spell books contain the following spells: (Level One) *charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, find familiar, magic missile, read magic, shocking grasp, unseen servant,* (Level Two) *continual light, darkness 15' radius, knock, levitate, vocalize, web, wizard lock,* (Level Three) *clairaudience, dispel magic, feign death, phantasmal force, protection from normal missiles, suggestion, water breathing,* (Level Four) *charm monster, hallucinatory terrain, magic mirror, wizard eye,* (Level Five) *animal growth, monster summoning III, passwall.*

The third floor contains the stairs and landing, an archway which leads into an inner gallery, and the guest chamber. The inner gallery shows a long line of individuals in Esmerelda's elven family. Most of them look a lot more like elves than she does. Many of them look like sorcerers, and some look very evil indeed. The inner wall is covered in many-colored tapestries, behind one of which is the door to the guest chamber. Dylandwyriel has his normal chance to find the concealed door, but it is just as simple to yank the tapestries down. The guest chamber is described below, under the section titled Sleeping Beauties.

The fourth floor contains Esmerelda's room and the stairwell which leads to the roof vestibule.

The roof vestibule is an empty chamber at the end of the stairwell, with the only ornamentation being a broom in a wall sconce. This is actually a *broom of flying* with the command

phrase "my pretty." The trap door on the top has a small hatch for Edgar to enter through. Neither it nor the trap door is *wizard locked*, but the main trap door can be barred from the inside.

Esmerelda's room has a *wizard locked* door. Inside, the room is dominated by a huge black-canopied bed against the southern wall. Next to the northern wall is a rack of black dresses, robes, cloaks and suits, a chest of drawers with sundry clothing, three pairs of black boots, and a full-length silver mirror. On a table by the bed is a crooked witch's hat. Edgar's perch is near the mirror. The only item that is magical in the room is the mirror. This item is activated with the command phrase "mirror, mirror," and works as a *crystal ball with clairaudience.* When Esmerelda uses it, it has no viewing limits and scrying chances are +15%, and the chances of detecting the scrying are one third normal.

The roof is a normal battlemented tower, where the gargoyles live. If any gargoyles made it back from the earlier encounter, they will be frozen in crouched positions at their normal posts as labelled. A trap door leads down into the roof vestibule. The trap door has a smaller hatch which Edgar can open with his beak.

Sleeping Beauties

When the PCs find the entrance to the guest chamber on the third floor, they will have to deal with the *wizard lock* that Esmerelda placed there. Once the PCs enter the room, they see a huge white-canopied bed, surrounded by white curtains. Nothing can be seen or heard inside. If the PCs round the foot of the bed, they see the beautiful Mahogany sleeping in it, her skin and hair turning white. In a chair, an incredibly handsome man in princely purple robes and gleaming chain mail is fast asleep, his outstretched arm laying across Mahogany's stomach. In his hand is a bright red apple with a large bite taken out of it. The apple is one of Esmerelda's poison apples, but the magic has gone out of it. The prince can simply be awakened by a *slow poison* spell or a kiss from a beautiful woman (Glimmerwing and Cygnythia qualify), but Mahogany will not respond to anything until returned to her terel.

If awakened, the prince initially will be suspicious, but will plead with the PCs to help Mahogany. He will explain what happened amid his royal sobs, and will listen to whatever the PCs have to say. He will follow their instructions if they seem to know what they are talking about. If his men are up for riding, he will tell them to follow along to Mahogany's tree. He will not, under any circumstances, let her out of his sight. If the PCs kidnap her while he is asleep, he will hunt them down when he awakens.

If Mahogany is brought to her tree by sundown or shortly after, she will become much healthier. See The Happy Ending below.

Prince Gallant: S 17, I 11, W 12, D 15, C 16, CH 18; AL NG; AC 0; MV 12; HD F9; hp 90; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg By weapon; SZ M (6′ 3″; ML 15; XP 3,000.

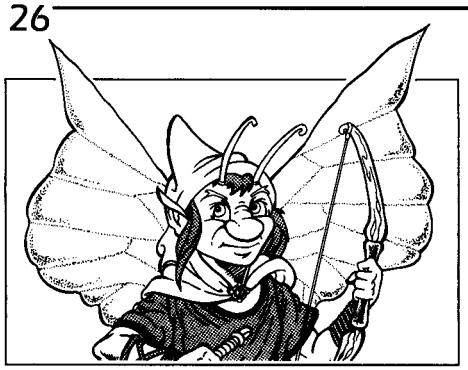
Prince Gallant is a stunningly handsome young man. His armor is *chain mail +4*. He wears a *long sword +3* and a belt pouch which contains 30 pp and a 500 gp gem. He also has a brooch of shielding (77 charges) around his neck, and a *potion of super heroism* in another belt pouch. He is an incredibly nice guy and his manner is very regal, as his charisma is so high.

The Happy Ending

And so, the friends found the beautiful Mahogany in the evil sorceress Esmerelda's tower. They were surprised to find Good Prince Gallant asleep at her side, with Esmerelda's poisoned apple in his hand. But an impulsive kiss from Glimmerwing roused the prince from his magical slumber. The friends, along with Good Prince Gallant and his men, took Mahogany back to her tree, where she returned to health. She was happy to see her friends, and even happier to see the handsome prince. With the color of autumn flush in her cheeks, Mahogany said that she wanted to have the picnic, and invited the prince and his men to stay. The goodies from Benthroewyn's basket were produced and everyone ate their fill of his splendidly seasoned vegetarian dishes. All the while, Mahogany watched her dear prince with loving eyes. As he ate, the prince told everyone that after searching for a very long time, he had found the most beautiful woman in the land. Everyone listened closely as he leaned across the bowl of cherries and asked Benthroewyn if he would perform the ceremony. And all the prince's men were happy as Benthroewyn turned to Mahogany and asked her if she was going to marry the handsome prince. Mahogany just smiled, and Benthroewyn prepared for a wedding ceremony. Then the prince started talking about how he would cut down most of the Peaceful Forest to put in a palace, and a big city, and a whole bunch of roads so he could be near his Mahogany. Mahogany dropped her bowl of nuts, and took her darling prince aside. After a few moments, the prince came back, smiled dashingly and said, "Saddle up, men, we have a beautiful bride to find! She must be out there somewhere!" As the prince and his baffled men rode out of the forest, Mahogany sat back down and told the friends that nothing, not even a handsome prince, was going to come between her and a good picnic. And the seven friends finished their meal, frolicked a little more, and lived happily ever after.

THE END ❑

Illustrations by Gary M. Williams



Thistledown
3rd Level Male Sprite Thief

STR: 6
INT: 12
WIS: 8
DEX: 18
CON: 13
CHA: 17
AC Normal: 6
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 21
THAC0: 19
Move: 9 Fl 18 (B)

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 2' 1"
Weight: 6 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Evershifting hues
Age: Unknown

Weapon Proficiencies: Sprite sword, sprite bow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (17), dancing (18), rope use (18)
Languages: Sprite, Common, Burrowing Mammal
Racial Abilities: +1 "to hit" with sprite sword and bow, *invisibility* at will, *detect evil or good* in a 50-yard radius at will, 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells

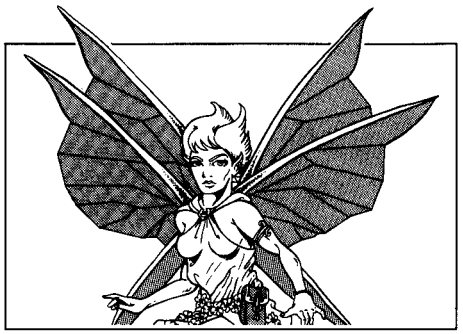
Magic Items: *Blouse of protection from normal missiles* (continuously functions as the 3rd level wizard spell), *stone of dancing lights* (creates lights as the 1st level wizard spell 3x/day), *oil of sharpness +1* (2 applications)

Other Equipment: Sprite sword and scabbard, sprite bow, quiver with 12 sprite arrows (each coated with sleep drug, creatures hit must save vs. poison or fall asleep for 1d6 hours)

Thief Skills:

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	DN	CW
60	37	35	99	85	55	72

All your life you've had fun. You are rarely serious. In fact, you usually try to keep others around you from becoming too serious—unless a situation gets dangerous. You are more adventurous and curious than the other members of your clan. Not that you are a mischievous little trouble-maker (what some call your pixie friends), though. You are just plain happy all the time, whether flitting about the forest, playing hidey-seek with some birds or chipmunks, or enjoying whatever presents itself.



Glimmerwing
7th Level Sylph Wizard

STR: 5
INT: 16
WIS: 11
DEX: 16
CON: 10
CHA: 19
AC Normal: 8
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 14
THAC0: 19
Move: 12 Fl 36 (B)

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 4' 8"
Weight: 86 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Platinum blond/Pale blue-green
Age: Unknown

Weapon Proficiencies: None
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (19), animal lore(16), direction sense (11)
Languages: Sylph, Common
Spells/day: 4 3 2 1
Racial Abilities: *invisibility* at will, 50% magic resistance, *conjure air elemental* once a week

Magic Items: Pot of *Nolzur's Marvelous pigments*, 3 handfuls of *faerie dust*. (When sprinkled on a human or animal, the victim falls into a deathlike slumber and cannot be awakened for six hours. Creatures with 4+1 or more hit dice or levels gain a save vs. spells.)

Other Equipment: Pegasi hair paintbrush, small belt pouch and two eagle feathers, caterpillar silk blouse, wildflower skirt and belt

Spells Carried: (First level) *charm person, detect magic, reduce, sleep;* (second level) *audible glamer, detect invisibility, ESP;* (third level) *gust of wind, slow;* (fourth level) *charm monster*

How wonderful it is to flit and glide about the high peaks, playing tag with the birds and hitching rides on clouds. The world is so pretty from way up there, and there is almost never anyone to bother you. You enjoy solitude, so thank goodness you can reach places where few others can tread.

You abhor violence and prefer to flee from danger. However, if there is nowhere to run, or friends are in trouble, you use your spells and other magic to neutralize opponents.

Dylandwyriel
4th Level Male Wood Elf Bard

STR: 12
INT: 13
WIS: 12
DEX: 17
CON: 14
CHA: 18
AC Normal: 7
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 18
THAC0: 19
Move: 12

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 4' 11"
Weight: 90 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Copper-red/Light brown
Age: 164

Weapon Proficiencies: Short sword, short bow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Singing (18), mandolin (17), juggling (17)
Languages: Elvish, Common, Treant, Woodland Mammal
Spells/day: 2 1
Racial Abilities: +1 "to hit" with sword and bow, 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells

Magic Items: *short sword +1 vs. evil opponents, ring of spell storing* (contains *faerie fire, goodberry, purify food and drink,* and *shillelagh* all cast at 6th level), 6 *goodberries*

Other Equipment: Short bow, quiver and 12 arrows, belt pouch and song book, vellum, quill pen and ink, rosewood mandolin, story books, back pack, spell book.

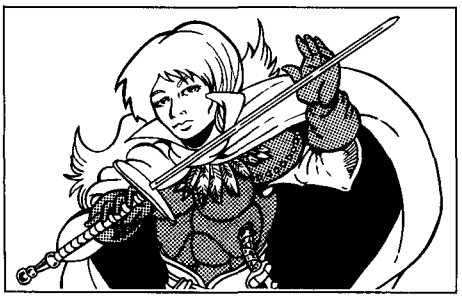
Bard Skills:

PP	DN	CW	RL
40	25	90	25

Spells Carried: (First level) *shield, jump;* (second level) *mirror image*

You were born and raised in a distant part of the forest. You were such a fine poet, songsmith, and storyteller that soon you ran out of original tales to retell. So you struck out into the greater world to seek the finest songs, stories, and poems to bring back.

You embrace the unknown, for it is the best source of material for the verses you seek. Though you sing of epic battles, you try to avoid participating in them. Sometimes evil must be vanquished, however, and you must encourage your friends to take up arms.



Cygnythia

3rd Level Human Swanmay Ranger

STR: 13
INT: 17
WIS: 15
DEX: 15
CON: 14
CHA: 16
AC Normal: 5
AC Rear: 6
Hit Points: 25
THAC0: 18
Move: 15

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 5′ 5″
Weight: 132 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Blond/Brown
Age: 22

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword, dagger, composite short bow
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Tracking (16), blind-fighting, endurance (14)
Languages: Common, Brownie, Dryad, Elvish, Pixie, Swan, Sylph

Swanmay Abilities: Shift to swan form and back (one shift/round); swan form statistics: AC 5; MV 3, Sw 3, Fl 19 (D); #At 3; Dmg 1/1/1-2; SA 50% likely to blind or confuse opponents, making attacks impossible on the following round; SD hit only by +1 or better weapons; MR 6%

Magic Items: *Ring of protection +2* (becomes leg band in swan form), collar of swan feathers

Other Equipment: Leather armor, long sword and scabbard, dagger and sheath, composite short bow, quiver and 20 arrows, leather back pack, 50′ rope, small steel mirror

Ranger Skills:

MS	HS
20	27

Can attack with two weapons at no penalty, +4 "to hit" vs. trolls.

You don't know how you came to be a swanmay, except that your mother was one. You grew up in these woods, sharing the company of swans, learning to love the plants and animals. Your mother taught you her trade as a ranger, and respect for all creatures, great and small.

You believe there must be some good in everything and everyone, and you try to find that goodness before you judge the creatures you meet.

Cassius

5th Level Centaur Stallion Fighter

STR: 18/61
INT: 10
WIS: 9
DEX: 16
CON: 15
CHA: 12
AC Normal: 3
AC Rear: 5
Hit Points: 32
THAC0: 16
Move: 18

Alignment: Neutral Good
Height: 7′ 5″ (4′ 10″ at the shoulder)
Weight: 1,027 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Brown
Age: 25

Weapon Proficiencies: Medium lance, club, composite long bow, hand axe, spear
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Running (9), endurance (15), hunting (8), fire-building (8)
Languages: Centaur, Common, Elvish

Racial Abilities: Attack with two front hooves for Dmg 1-6/1-6 in addition to weapon attack; or with two rear hooves for Dmg 1-8/1-8; double damage when charging with lance, but no hoof attacks when charging

Magic Items: *Horseshoes of Surefootedness* (Allows wearer to maintain movement rate of 18 for 12 hours a day without tiring; wearer never trips, steps into snares, or becomes *entangled;* wearer can climb slopes and traverse unstable surfaces without falling), 10 *arrows +1*

Other Equipment: Medium lance, oaken club and holster, composite long bow, quiver and 10 normal arrows, leather shoulder bag, 6 wooden stakes, 100′ rope, belt and harness, oats and foodstuffs, large waterproof blanket

You are a powerful centaur, a combination of two of the finest beasts on the earth. You have been blessed with great strength and stamina, making you a fine athlete and fighter.

You exercise regularly to maintain your fine physique, and you eat only the most nutritious of foods. Of course, you require large meals at regular intervals so as to provide your massive frame with sufficient energy.

Benthroewyn

5th Level Human Male Werebear Cleric

STR: 17
INT: 15
WIS: 17
DEX: 13
CON: 17
CHA: 12
AC Normal: 10
AC Rear: 10
Hit Points: 35
THAC0: 18
Move: 12

Alignment: Chaotic Good
Height: 6′ 9″
Weight: 297 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Brown
Age: 34

Weapon Proficiencies: Quarterstaff, Sling, Staff Sling
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Herbalism (17), cooking (15)
Languages: Common, Bear, Centaur, Elvish, Satyr, Stone Giant
Spells/day: 5 5 2

Werebear Abilities: Heal at three times normal rate, cure disease in other creatures (requires 1-4 weeks); shift to bear form and back (one shift/round); bear form statistics: AC 2; MV 9; THAC0 13; #At 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; SA if both claws hit can hug for 2-16 points of damage; SD hit only by +1 or better weapons

Magic Item: *Scroll* (contains *speak with plants* cast at 8th level)

Other Equipment: oaken quarterstaff; sling and 12 stones; belt pouch and spell components; various herbs, leaves, and fungi; small cooking pot, ladle, picnic basket and food

Spells Carried: (First level) *cure light wounds* (x3), *light;* (second level) *augury, find traps, resist fire, slow poison, speak with animals;* (third level) *create food and water, dispel magic*

It was several years ago, almost a decade, when you barely survived a vicious mauling from a bear. It was not long before you exhibited the signs of lycanthropy. Despondent about your condition, you fled from society to these woods. Here, given time to reflect, you eventually grew to accept and control your affliction. Living with such violent, destructive impulses has taught you great wisdom, compassion, and restraint.

With Great Power

Contest of Vengeance

by Steven E. Schend

Welcome back to *With Great Power.* Last summer, Marvel Comics pitted nearly all their heroes against unfamiliar or unknown villains to surprising effect in the "Acts of Vengeance" crossover series. To celebrate POLYHEDRON™ Newszine's new monthly status, we're introducing our "Contest of Vengeance." We are presenting fans of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES role-playing game four new villains for use in their own game worlds. The character roughs appear at the end of this column.

Amnesia victims all, these villains need histories and backgrounds, and Newszine readers can help them! Simply examine the characters' powers and abilities, and provide us with histories, role-playing notes, secret identities, and other details to fully bring these characters to life.

Guidelines

- Entries must contain full details on either three or four of the villains given below; entries will be disqualified if there are less than three villains accounted for. The number of villains detailed (three or four) will not affect the judging, as each entry will be judged separately. Further, your name and membership number must appear on each page of your villain histories—in the event pages get separated during judging.
- These characters are designed for the Marvel Universe and can be the results of any plots or sub-plots published by Marvel Comics or by TSR, Inc (in MARVEL SUPER HEROES game products). They can have original histories, but there should be at least one specific tie-in to the Marvel Universe. These characters can become a part of any major storyline, but please:

  * Don't bring back Phoenix or any other dead characters. Of course, we'll defer to the age-old comics rule: no body found, no death here . . .
  * Unless some established character has a suitably shady past, don't introduce Peter Parker's long, lost brother as Villain X. And despite his own very shady past, none of these villains are related to Wolverine—trust me!
  * If your villains' origins rely on old, obscure comic book references, please supply us with the titles and issue numbers for correlation. If you've come up with a great origin, I might want to read where these ideas originated.
  * If you choose to alter established supporting characters (Willie Lumpkin, Stevie Hunter, Alicia Storm, etc.), find characters who fit the general motif of the villain, or find a very good reason why these characters now act and dress this way.
- Entries must contain the following information:

  Villains' names and misc. information (marital status, legal status, relatives, etc.)

  Explanations (within History/Background) of any ability scores higher than normal human levels (PR-GD)

  Role-paying notes on each villain

  Contacts and equipment for each villain

The Fine Print

- All entries are considered submissions to the POLYHEDRON Newszine.
- Entries should be typed or printed legibly (double spacing please!). Computer printouts are acceptable if they can be easily read. A separate letter/disclosure form (containing your name, address, and age) should be included with each submission. If you want your entry returned, be sure to include a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Mail to: Contest of Vengeance/ Mr. Steven E. Schend, c/o POLYHEDRON Newszine, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

Deadlines, Etc.

- Entries must be postmarked by July 1, 1991, to be eligible for this contest.
- All entries will be reviewed by staff members and myself and judged on: **originality, ties with the Marvel Universe, details and completeness of each character, plausibility of overall history and behavior (role-playing).**

Prizes!

The winners of this contest will be announced in a future POLYHEDRON Newszine. The best entries will be published.

First Place: New MARVEL SUPER HEROES game Basic Set: Newly revised and updated for the '90s, this new set incorporates the best of MARVEL SUPER HEROES game Basic and Advanced Rules sets for new gamers and old fans alike. This boxed set has all the rules needed for playing the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game and gives the latest gaming statistics for all your favorite heroes and villains. Release date: May 1991. **Plus—** MSL1/X-Terminate: Factor Three is back after 20 years and they want to make X-Factor x-tinct! This high-powered module pits your heroes against some of their most powerful enemies . . . and some of the most unexpected enemies of all. Release date: June 1991. **Plus—** MSL2/Warlord of Baluur: The first of a trilogy of adventures based on the Negative Zone, Blastaar escapes from the anti-matter universe and begins his siege of Earth. He's searching for the Cosmic Control Rod, and only the Fantastic Four can stop him! Release date: August 1991.

Second Place: MSL1/X-Terminate and MSL2/Warlord of Baluur.

Third Place: MSL2/Warlord of Baluur.

Best of all, the prizes will be autographed.

The Villains

Desperado

F REMARKABLE (30)
A EXCELLENT (20)
S EXCELLENT (20)
E REMARKABLE (30)
R REMARKABLE (30)
I EXCELLENT (20)
P GOOD (10)

Health: 100
Karma: 60

POWERS:

- Light Generation: Remarkable ability
  —Creation of Light "Horse" (Control EX; Speed EX; Body GD; Protection FE), allows Flight (Poor air speed)
  —Light "Guns" (range 4 areas) with Remarkable energy damage
  —Light "Lasso" of Excellent strength; entangles on yellow FEAT roll
- Heightened Attacks: 4 shooting attacks per round

Limitation: The forms listed above are the only forms Desperado can generate; these forms are very specific to the Old West—Desperado could not generate a Light Uzi instead of his standard Light Colt .45.

TALENTS:

- Weapons Skill: Guns (+1CS)
- Weapons Skill: Lasso (+1CS to grapple)
- Performer

Kaleidoscope

F EXCELLENT (20)
A REMARKABLE (30)
S GOOD (10)
E EXCELLENT (20)
R GOOD (10)
I REMARKABLE (30)
P GOOD (10)

Health: 80
Karma: 80

POWERS:

- "Kaleidoscope Effect:" Kaleidoscope can generate a field of whirling, sparkling, colorful light energy in a flat oval plane—these ovals can vary in size from 3' long and 2' wide to 9' long to 6' wide. This villainess uses these fields to the following effects:
  —Force Field Generation: Incredible durability
  —Teleport Self: Amazing range and ability (the K field does not appear in this case; Kaleidescope simply disappears)
  —Teleport Others: Remarkable range and ability

Limitation: Her Force Field is only a 1 area effect.

TALENTS:

- Martial Arts A

Mongrel

F EXCELLENT (20)
A REMARKABLE (30)
S GOOD (10)
E INCREDIBLE (40)
R POOR (4)
I REMARKABLE (30)
P INCREDIBLE (40)

Health: 100
Karma: 74

POWERS:

- Fur/Body Armor: Poor
- Lightning Speed: Amazing
- Claws: Good edged damage, Good material strength
- Tracking: Incredible ability to follow scents
- Resistance to Cold: Incredible
- Extra Attacks: Remarkable attacks with claws

TALENTS:

- Martial Arts B: Claw attacks at Incredible ability
- Professional Skills: Veterinary Medicine

Sidestep

F EXCELLENT (20)
A AMAZING (50)
S GOOD (10)
E UNEARTHLY (100)
R EXCELLENT (20)
I UNEARTHLY (100)
P REMARKABLE (30)

Health: 180
Karma: 150

POWERS:

- "Ghost Self:" Sidestep generates an illusionary duplicate of herself anywhere from 1 area to 2 miles away from her actual position (Illusionary Duplication of Incredible rank); this illusionary "ghost self" duplicates all her actual movements and sounds. Sidestep's actual physical body is invisible to normal vision and heat sensors, but she can be tracked psionically and by scent. She can teleport from her actual position to exchange places with her illusionary self with a Green FEAT roll (Teleportation-Self with Remarkable ability).

Limitations: Sidestep cannot control her power, and her physical body is always invisible in its actual position; her body is only seen as her "ghost self." Sidestep can only generate one illusionary duplicate of herself at one time; this duplicate is still generated if Sidestep is asleep or unconscious.

TALENTS:

- Martial Arts D
- Acrobatics
- Law Enforcement
- Crime

Well, folks, there you have them. These villains are yours to play with now, and we'll be waiting for your explanations of how they came to be. A few questions must be answered: How did Sidestep develop a career in Law Enforcement and Crime? Desperado was in show business? Was Mongrel a veterinarian? Have fun with this contest, people, and we'll see you next month.

❑

Into The Dark

The Good, The Bad, And The Unwatchable

by James Lowder

Good sword & sorcery films are tough to find. Most, like the dog I review in this issue, are cliched and generally offensive. Luckily, there are a plethora of good science fiction, horror, and "mainstream" fantasy flicks to make up for the dearth of entertaining sword & sorcery. We'll start off this month with two tapes (one horror, one mainstream fantasy) that are definitely worth a look. As usual, the films reviewed here are rated as follows:

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

CARNIVAL OF SOULS

1962, 85 Minutes
VidAmerica/Panorama Entertainment
Director: Herk Harvey
Starring: Candace Hilligoss, Sidney Berger, Francis Feist
****½**

Until the release of this video, *Carnival of Souls* was only available through mail order ads in the back of a few esoteric film magazines. Not surprising since, as director Herk Harvey points out, the film's original release was far from successful. However, *Carnival* found its way to midnight showings and built a cult audience in the almost twenty years since its creation. Now, VidAmerica has released the official director's cut of this would-be classic, complete with a brief introduction by Herk Harvey and five minutes of footage not seen since *Carnival*'s original run.

This haunting film tells the story of Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss), a cold, stand-offish church organist. Mary seems to have few friends and little love for the world. In fact, we learn that she rather cynically chose her occupation because it's an easy, paying job, not because of any great interest in religion. After an accident in which the car she's in plummets off a bridge and she is the only passenger who survives, Mary finds herself haunted by visions of a pasty-faced ghoul, then becomes obsessed with a deserted pavilion in the town to which she moves. This haunting presents her with a difficult choice: she can try to face the frightening spirits that follow her *or* seek protection and comfort with a fellow human being.

The problem might seem simple on the surface: because Mary is frigid, she is being punished supernaturally. The solution appears even simpler: she should run with open arms to the nearest human. After a closer look at the film, however, it becomes clear that the people with whom Mary can ally in order to ward off the ghouls are rather objectionable, too. Her neighbor, who seems at first to be a romantic interest, turns out to be a superficial drunkard; the kindly priest at her place of work is a judgmental old coot; and the psychiatrist she seeks out sometimes seems as cold and as analytical as Mary.

The viewer is left with a chilling, nightmarish vision of a person alienated from society. The fine, inventive use of sound—including echoing, hollow organ music—the stark, powerful make-up for the ghostly tormentors, and the dreamlike black & white cinematography all heighten the plot substantially. And even though you'll likely find the end of the film a bit predictable, *Carnival of Souls* will definitely run shivers down your spine.

THE NAVIGATOR

1988, 92 Minutes
Circle Films/Trylon Video
Director: Vincent Ward
Starring: Hamish McFarlane, Bruce Lyons, Chris Haywood
****

1348. England, Cumbria March. Plague is sweeping across the land. Like the rest of the country, isolated mining villages are subject to the fear that the Black Death will come calling. There is only one solution, it seems: take an offering—a spire forged from local copper—to the tallest church in Christendom. God will then surely stave off the sickness. The problem is that this church is on "the other side of the world."

The villagers elect a party to take on this challenge. Griffin (Hamish McFarlane) is a young boy who has visions of the future. He has foreseen the journey they must undertake, so he becomes the guide—the navigator—for the trip. Among the others on the quest is Griffin's older brother, Conner (Bruce Lyons), who is the most-traveled of the villagers.

As director Ward introduces us to the village and the main characters, the film is in black-and-white. The harsh, dreary countryside, caught in the grip of winter, looks far less romantic than the typical Hollywood portrait of medieval England. Only Griffin's visions, depicted in glowing color, break the somber tone of the film's opening. Eventually, however, the searchers find a way to tunnel through the earth and break out into a modern city, in bright, vivid color.

From that point, the heroes must face the perils of modern life as they get their spike cast for the spire and search for the church Griffin saw in his vision. At its high points, the film succeeds in showing the modern world as nightmarish and awe-inspiring. In one sequence, Conner races across a junkyard in which the cranes and trucks sound and move like huge, groaning monsters. He finds himself whisked around the city on the front of a train, the speed distorting his face.

At worst, however, the sequences in the city trivialize the vast, overwhelming differences between the heroes' village and the modern world. While the ease with which Griffin and the others get their spike cast is a tribute to the link between working men in any age, the lack of real problems with language differences and other social customs weakens the plot. In addition, Griffin continues to have visions—specifically of someone falling from the spire—throughout the film. By midway through *The Navigator*, you will likely be rather tired of seeing that tight shot of hands slipping from a ladder over and over again.

The Navigator will transport you back to 14th century England in the same way Griffin's visions bring the heroes to a modern city. In fact, the interplay of the visions/time-travel adventure and

the story of the March's battle against plague makes this a film worth viewing two or three times. Be forewarned that the dialect spoken by the characters is difficult to understand at the start of the film, but careful attention—and perhaps a second showing—will overcome this technical weakness.

TOWER OF LONDON

1962, 79 Minutes
UA/Wood Knapp Video
Director: Roger Corman
Starring: Vincent Price, Michael Pate, Joan Freeman
***

While we're on the subject of England, we can deal with this campy, but relatively entertaining release. Like many of Roger Corman's Poe films, this vague adaptation of English history tries hard to look and sound authentic to its supposed historical setting. Corman does succeed in setting a rather stereotypical Gothic atmosphere in the film's drafty castle, but anyone knowing even a little about the facts—such as they are—surrounding Richard of York's rise to the throne will quickly see that Corman is playing fast and loose with history. Of course, no one said a story like this had to follow historical fact. Shakespeare certainly put his own spin on the story of Richard III, too.

On the other hand, Corman is definitely *no* Shakespeare. Like the 1939 film of the same name (which starred Basil Rathbone and Boris Karloff), Corman's *Tower of London* describes the rise and fall of Richard of York, the eventual Richard III of England. That's all this newer version really has in common with the more respectable Universal release of the thirties, though Vincent Price appeared in the older film, too. In the 1939 *Tower*, Price played Richard's brother, Clarence—the one who gets drowned in the famous vat of wine. He gets a promotion for the sixties version, playing the hunchbacked Richard himself.

The Richard III portrayed in *Tower of London* is a weak, twitching villain. Price plays the part for all it's worth, rolling his eyes in fright when the ghosts of his victims appear, sneering through most of his lines, and leering with evil glee at the helpless people he drags off to the Tower for torture. The character's strength—and his motivation to become king—comes from his wife. Corman borrowed heavily on Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth in developing Richard's queen. She easily overpowers Price's whimpy king, making him look all the more pathetic when he quivers at every creaking door and shudders at each blast of lightning.

Actually, Price is just working out the grossly oversimplified psychology textbook character made of Richard III in this film. With the frequent, and often silly, visitations by the ghosts of Richard's victims, it's clear Corman wanted to reduce this complex historical figure to a weak, overreaching politician who is plagued by his guilty conscience. Since there's no doubt in the viewer's mind that Price's Richard is simply insane, the ghosts aren't frightening. We know they're only figments, even if they unnerve poor Vincent.

Despite and perhaps *because* of this simple, overwrought plot, *Tower of London* does have the typical Corman charm. Even though the low budget shows in many sequences—especially the battle at Bosworth—the pacing is quick and the acting exaggerated enough that you won't be bored by the film. Don't expect too much and prepare yourself for some hammy performances, and you'll find this one a fair way to pass the time.

DEATHSTALKER

1983, 80 Minutes
Vestron
Director: John Watson
Starring: Richard Hill, Barbi Benton, Richard Brooker
½

There are two varieties of "bad" films. First, you have movies like the immortal *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. These films are a perverse breed, shabbily created—but entertaining nonetheless. It's almost as if the movie is worth watching *because* it's so incredibly bad.

Then there are films like *Deathstalker*. This sorry Hollywood sword & sorcery epic lacks everything that makes a film watchable—a good plot, solid acting, strong technical direction, believable special effects.

Our main character (I refuse to call him a hero) is a mercenary named Deathstalker. His goal is a castle, located in the middle of a generic fantasy forest, where he will fight the evil sorcerer who has usurped the throne. *Why* he wishes to fight the wizard changes throughout the story. One minute, Deathstalker is questing after three powerful artifacts, the next he's trying to rescue the real king's daughter (Barbi Benton).

Along the road, Deathstalker picks up some allies, and this unlikely group of heroes gets to the castle, only to waste their time by competing in a tournament. The winner will be declared the wizard-king's heir, you see, so. . . . Wait, now Deathstalker's forgotten about both those other quests.

It's almost as if the writers dug up every sword & sorcery cliche and jumbled them together, with little regard for continuity. As Deathstalker, Richard Hill spouts sad one-liners like an Arnold Schwarzenegger wanna-be. Overblown, trumpet-heavy music blasts on the soundtrack every time a fight starts. Swords unrealistically whoosh through the air before they lop off heads, which then inevitably spiral through the air in slow motion. At times when Deathstalker might be forced to think for himself, his mentor (an old witch with bad make-up) appears and tells him what to do.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing about this film is its depiction of women. From the opening scene, where some barbarian and the girl he holds captive are attached by subhumans who look like Ringo Starr in *Caveman*, the women in *Deathstalker* serve as either struggling hostages or amorous slaves. The "heroes" of the film treat the women with as much contempt as the rest of the lowlifes in this generic fantasy world (the director is included in that group, too). Considering the hype the video box builds around former *Playboy* model Barbi Benton, this should not be a surprise, however.

More than anything, this film is boring. There is nothing erotic about the nude scene and the fights are badly choreographed, so even sex & violence junkies will find themselves snoring twenty minutes into the tape. Those of you who play fantasy RPGs should be really ashamed if your gaming world resembles *Deathstalker* in the least.

By the way, I would give this film no stars, but that would mean there are only a few, if any, sf, horror, or fantasy films worse than *Deathstalker*. It's hard for me to imagine any worse films right now, but I would bet there are some out there. Any nominees?

❑

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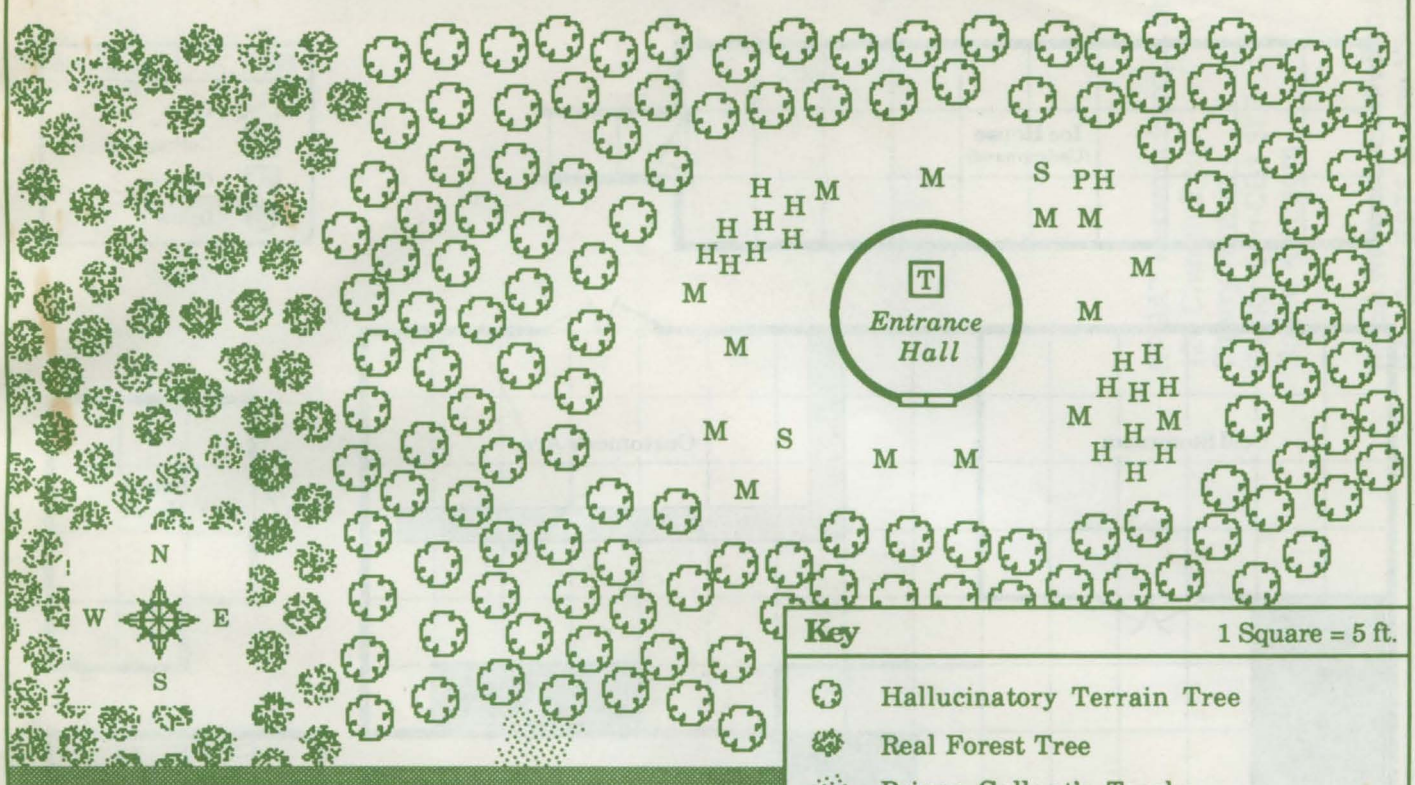
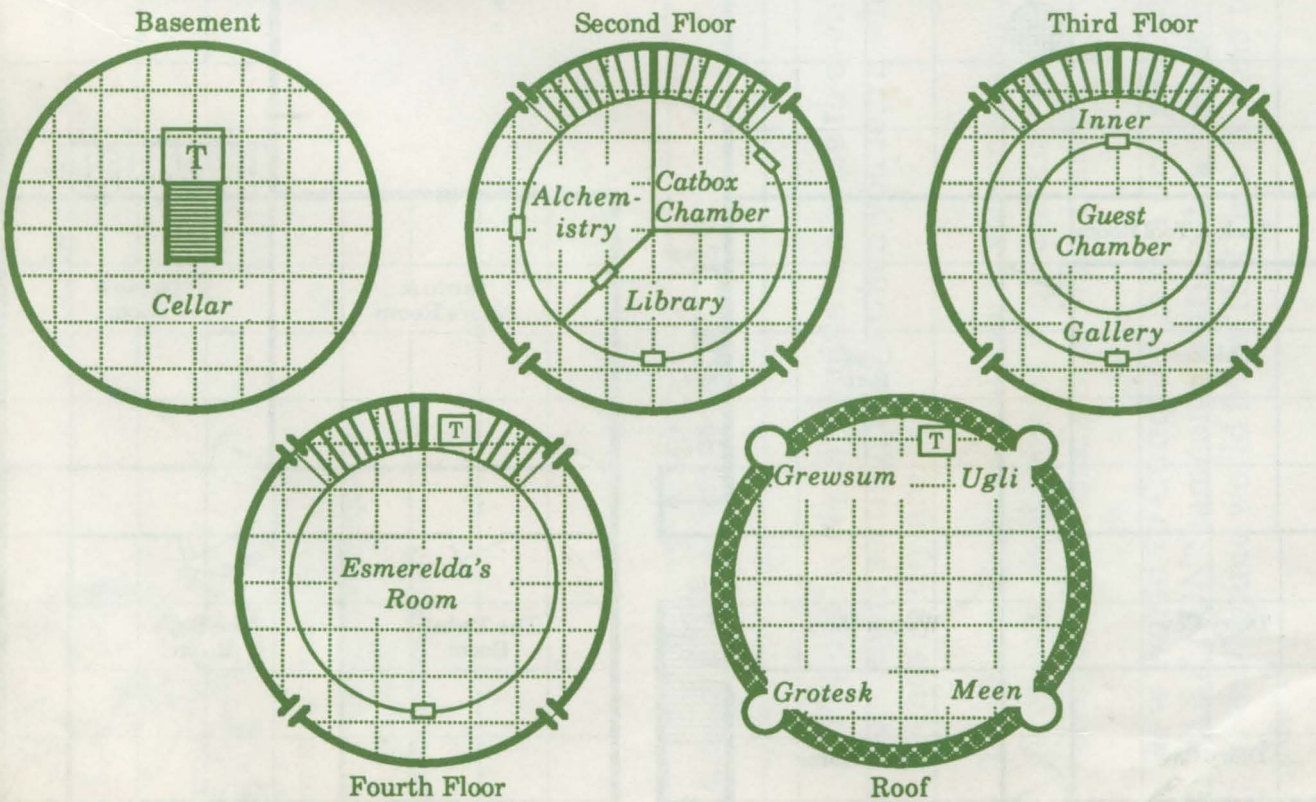
Esmerelda's Tower and Environs



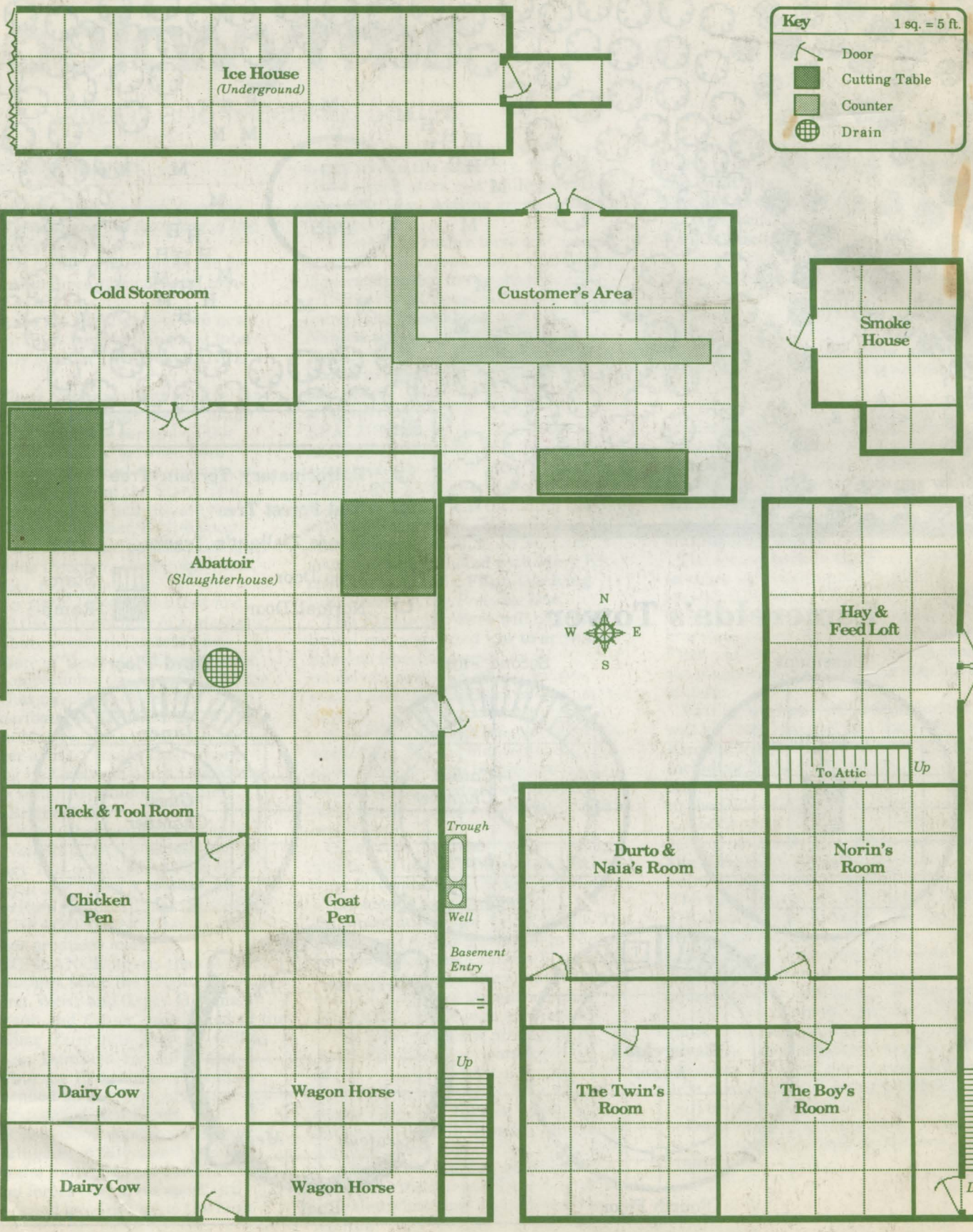
Key 1 Square = 5 ft.

- Hallucinatory Terrain Tree
- Real Forest Tree
- Prince Gallant's Tracks
- T Trap Door
- Normal Door
- Stairs
- Ramp

Esmerelda's Tower



The Two Brothers Butchery



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Bookwyrms

Elven Nations and Meetings Sextet

by Pat McGilligan

The fated history of the high elven nation, Silvanost, and the founding of the exile kingdom, Qualinost . . .

The first bonds of friendship, the formative adventures of the beloved companions of Krynn . . .

These are the highlights of two new series in TSR's long-running and internationally popular DRAGONLANCE® saga.

The *Elven Nations* trilogy relates, for the first time, the tragic history of the Silvanesti. The story centers on the divisive relationship between twin brothers who are blood descendants of the ruling Speaker of the Stars. The rivalry between the heir apparent, Sithas, and his brother, Kith-Kanan, results in internecine political intrigue, mysterious treachery, foul magic, and, inevitably, full-scale war.

Also in 1991: Three books that are actually the initial volley of a *Meetings Sextet* that reveals the untold first encounters of Tanis Half-Elven, leader of the companions; the dwarf Flint Fireforge; that mischievous kender Tasslehoff Burrfoot; the twins Caramon and Raistlin Majere, one a stout warrior and the other a sickly mage; their sword-wielding half-sister, Kitiara Uth Matar; and the troubled Solamnic knight, Sturm Brightblade.

First Born, the opening book of the *Elven Nations* trilogy, was released in February. It is authored by Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter, who have written prolifically for the best-selling DRAGONLANCE series. This team has produced more DRAGONLANCE novels than any other authors since the original team of Margaret Weiss and Tracy Hickman. Thompson and Carter contributed to the best-selling *Tales* anthology, as well as the books **Darkness and Light** and **Riverwind the Plainsman.** They also have penned an Arabian adventure for TSR, Inc. called **Red Sands.**

Their new novel depicts the storied elven kingdom of Silvanesti, and describes the inevitable personal and political forces that drive apart two brothers and two factions of the high-born.

Interestingly, Thompson and Carter do not live in the same city. The long-time collaborators met while participating in the same writing group in North Carolina.

"I tend to be rather terse and action-oriented," Thompson said, "while Tonya is more attentive to the characters."

TSR stalwart Douglas Niles will contribute the second book in the *Elven Nations* trilogy, called **The Kinslayer Wars,** which is due in August. Niles is known to readers as the author of the best-selling *Moonshae* and *Maztica* trilogies in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. But Niles has an extensive DRAGONLANCE world resume and has written more DRAGONLANCE world modules than any other TSR writer, including the seminal, *Dragons of Triumph,* the climax of the epic module series. Last year, Niles co-authored with Mary Kirchoff the successful **Flint, the King** installment of the *Preludes* line.

The Kinslayer Wars will chart the brutal and protracted war to drive the humans from Silvanesti, an ill-conceived campaign whose decisive events unite the brothers but divide the nation.

A one-time English teacher, Niles has worked for TSR for nine years, and is noted for his ability to juggle several writing assignments at once: one or more novels, a couple of modules, and a board game.

Climaxing the *Elven Nations* trilogy will be the tale of Wildrunners' exodus from Silvanesti and the first revelation of the magnificent elven city of Qualinost during the Age of Might. **The Qualinesti** will be published in November. Thompson and Carter will write the book and promise a story that will captivate the estimated six million-plus DRAGONLANCE saga enthusiasts.

The *Meetings Sextet* premiered in April. The first was co-authored by Mark Anthony and Ellen Porath, and is called **Kindred Spirits.** In it, Tanis meets Flint, way back in the days when Flint was living in Silvanesti as metalsmith to the Speaker of the Stars. Tanis is accused of a murder, and Flint springs to his defense. Their friendship is sealed when they capture the true villain.

In one of those unusual pairings that seems to be a TSR specialty, Anthony and Porath live hundreds of miles distant, the former in North Carolina and the latter within driving distance of TSR in Wisconsin.

Anthony is a budding paleontologist, whose focus is an epoch 65 million years ago. "In some ways," Anthony notes, "there are a lot of parallels to Krynn because the era of the Earth that I study is like a different world, and it takes a lot of imagination to envision it."

Porath juggled work on her first novel with the task of raising a newborn. A lecturer in agriculture journalism at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, she is a veteran wire service reporter who has written numerous newspaper articles. Like her co-author, she has an anthropology degree.

The second book in the *Meetings Sextet* takes up the chronology with the arrival of Tasslehoff in Solace; the light-fingered Tas pockets one of Flint's bracelets, which turns out to be cursed. Flint and Tanis give chase, but Tas and the elusive bracelet keep one step ahead of them.

Writing the aptly-titled **Wanderlust** will be Mary Kirchoff and Steve Winter. Kirchoff has published widely for TSR, including books in the *Endless Quest* and *Amazing Stories* series. Her work in the DRAGONLANCE realm includes a contribution to *Tales,* and two best-selling novels, **Kendermore** and **Flint, the King** (with Douglas Niles). She edited **The Leaves From The Inn Of The Last Home** and **The Art Of The DRAGONLANCE Saga.** She also heads TSR's book department.

Winter has worked for TSR as an editor for more than a decade and is responsible for editing and developing many of the company's popular AD&D® game materials. Mary and Steve concede that Tas is a tricky character, full of humor and spontaneity, and all they will divulge of **Wanderlust** is that it will be surprise-packed.

Dark Heart, the final book in the series, will be released in January 1992. ❑